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MARCH 2025



## CRACKING CONCORD'S BIRDNAPPING CASE

Feathered Follies owner, Mercedes, reunites with her beloved cockatoo, Tofu, rescued by Concord Police.

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P.12

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# Old-Fashioned Police Work Catches Birdnapper

by David King

On September 7, Feathered Follies store owner Mercedes Kemp opened her store and noticed in a back room the blinds were messed up, the cages were pushed over, the window glass was broken, and two of her precious birds, an umbrella cockatoo named Tofu, and an African red belly parrot named Plato, were missing. Both, valued in the thousands of dollars, had been birdnapped.

She reported the theft to local TV stations, Online news, social media, and of course, the Concord Police Department. Within a month, Concord Police Detective Dylan Luciano had located one of the birds, Tofu, in the Los Angeles area and apprehended one of the two suspected birdnappers.

With no video at the crime scene and the only clue being a single feather in the parking lot, how did police ever track Tofu in Los Angeles?

Luciano had followed a trail that led from Concord to Union City, to San Jose, to Hawaii, to Hayward, to Modesto to Los Angeles. That is some crack detective work.

Processing the crime scene for fingerprints and DNA produced no leads. So, he put out an APB (All Points Bulletin) to all the law enforcement agencies in the Bay Area.

In roughly three weeks, the Union City Police who were investigating a couple of guys, Edward Casey, 45, of San Jose, and Erick Stabile, 44, Fremont, for burglaries, noticed a big white bird in their San Jose house. Remembering the APB, they contacted Detective Luciano to see if it could be related.

Pictures of Tofu and Plato were also



found on Casey's phone as well as a search history for exotic bird stores and directions to Feathered Follies. Phone records and traffic cameras put him on route to and from the store at the time of the burglary.

By the time Luciano could execute a search warrant in San Jose, Stabile had become nervous and fled with the birds. He had fled to Hawaii, where his father lived.

"We were able to find out where the suspect's father had lived and get ahold of the father on the phone. But he was uncooperative," Luciano said.

The only thing the father was willing to tell the police was that Stabile had sold the birds to a woman in a hotel in Hayward. A forensic examination of the father's cell phone device pursuant to a search warrant confirmed that someone had purchased at least one of the birds from Stabile.

"Her name was Sonia Perez, also a transient from Fremont," Mercedes recalls. Perez could not be located so Luciano contacted her family who said they hadn't seen their daughter in a while. But they stated they have a family friend who lives in Modesto who's into birds.

"We went to Modesto and found the (Perez's) family who led us to the family friend who was known to sell birds," Luciano said. They reached out to that guy and confirmed Perez had sold him a big white bird. But he had since sold it to another bird seller in Modesto.

At this point, the trail ends for Plato.

"So, we went to the pet store in Modesto. We found out that the two owners of this store had split up within the last couple of weeks. The one owner we were talking to said that he didn't have the bird or knew anything about it but led us to the second owner. We went to the second owner who was very cooperative. He and his wife said they didn't know that the bird was stolen."

They told Luciano that they, unfortunately had just sold it to a guy who had come up from Los Angeles, bought it, and then took it back to LA.

"I got brought into the loop because the husband and wife had posted an Instagram post with available birds, and Tofu was in that. I was able to positively ID him," Mercedes said. "I actually got to talk to the wife on the phone. As soon as they heard that he was stolen, they're like,

'Oh my god. We're going to make it right.' They drove down to LA that night, talked to the customer, gave him his money back, and brought Tofu back at two in the morning."

By morning, Mercedes was in Modesto to recover her stolen Tofu. "We saw each other from across the street. He knew who I was as soon as we locked eyes." A video of the reunion is on YouTube. It's hard to tell who was more excited, Tofu or Mercedes.

Detective Luciano attributed the successful investigation to good old-fashioned police work. "This was an investigation that encompassed the three main parts in law enforcement: agency collaboration with other police departments, technology, and simply good old-fashioned police work, getting your boots on the ground and talking to people. We were led to nineteen or twenty different leads as we were going through this, running all throughout San Jose, the different bird stores, and going to dead end after dead end. This is all three key components of twenty-first century policing put into one."

As for Plato, the investigation is still ongoing, Feathered Follies is offering a substantial reward for Plato's return. The person of interest, Sonia Perez, has yet to be located.

Scan the QR code to watch the incredibly emotional reunion.





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**Carlyn Obringer**  
Concord Mayor  
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## State of the City Highlights

On February 6, I sat down with award-winning journalist Ann Notarangelo to discuss the State of the City of Concord at the 40th annual Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce Luncheon.

Here is a summary of our conversation.

### Over the last several years, highlights for me have included:

Making progress on fixing the roads by spending \$114 million over a five-year period to rebuild and repave all arterials and some neighborhood streets.

Finding a development partner trusted by the Concord Community, to redevelop the former Concord Naval Weapons Station.

Getting 1,000 units of new housing in the development pipeline, 500 of which are affordable to people making between 30% and 80% of the Area Median Income.

Distributing \$2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds, in the form of small business grants, to help keep Concord small businesses afloat.

Launching the award-winning Creative Concord Program as an economic development tool which brought regional performers and 18 new murals to our city.

Improving the cleanliness and safety of Downtown Concord via a pilot program that included a security guard, day porter, and an on-demand pressure-washing program.

Developing a community-informed Homeless Strategic Plan which is now being implemented.

### What is being done to support businesses big and small?

Providing free Small Business Development Center consultations: <https://www.eastbaysbdc.org/in-person-advising-concord/>

Launching the Shop Concord gift card



program around the holidays annually to encourage support for small Concord businesses.

Me as Mayor, and the economic development team, highlighting small businesses on social media.

Me, as Mayor, and economic development staff, conducting goodwill visits with large employers to hear directly what we can do to support their sustainability and growth.

### Things to look forward to this year?

Activities around town to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Concord Pavilion.

“The most wonderful time of the year” — the award-winning Music & Market series in Concord’s “living room,” Todos Santos Plaza, from June through September.

Expanding my “September of Service” park beautification or tree planning event in each City Council district during the month of September.

Raising funds to help preserve the historic Don Fernando Pacheco Adobe via a bowling event on October 4, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at Clayton Valley Bowl.

Monthly “Beer with the Mayor” and “Coffee with the Mayor” events as ways to connect with the community in an informal setting while highlighting a local Concord business/community space.

Most of all, I look forward to continuing to work with Concord residents, local workers, and business owners to make our city an even better place to live, work, raise a family, do business, and retire!

The entire State of the City can be viewed at:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6Zl9vFeybY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6Zl9vFeybY)



**Kim Trupiano**  
Mayor, Clayton  
[kimt@claytonca.gov](mailto:kimt@claytonca.gov)

## The City Of Clayton Kicks Off Full Events Calendar This Spring

There is so much happening in Clayton this spring including several events, a new restaurant, and outdoor activities, all right at our doorstep.

“Noises Off” performed by Clayton Community Theatre runs March 13 – 24 at Endeavor Hall.

The Art & Wine Festival sponsored by Clayton Business and Community Association returns April 26 and 27 to downtown Clayton.

Concerts in the Grove kicks off its 18th season on May 17 and continues every other Saturday thereafter through August 23. Fan favorites like Pride & Joy and East Bay MUDD are back again this year at The Grove downtown Clayton.

Take the Clayton Garden Tour, sponsored by the Clayton Historical Society & Museum on May 16 and 17.

A new dining option at Enye Latin Table which just opened in February, explores the vibrant flavors of Latin America. It’s a wonderful addition to our downtown dining offerings.

Our City has 27 miles of hiking, biking, and walking trails, five community parks, one dog park, and equestrian staging all on over 500 acres of open space. For a complete list of our trails, visit the City’s trail system page at [Claytonca.gov](http://Claytonca.gov). We also have maps available for the entire trail system for \$2.00.

### Unsung Hero Award

Each month the City is awarding

an Unsung Hero Award to someone making a significant difference in our community. We honored Linda Pinder for the month of January and on March 4 we will have honored Paul Jordan for the month of February. If you have suggestions about future Unsung Heroes, please send them to me directly [kimt@claytonca.gov](mailto:kimt@claytonca.gov).

### In other City news:

Our City is nearly ready to begin the recruitment process for a permanent Police Chief. At our February 18th City Council meeting, we reviewed and approved a new salary schedule for this position. We also agreed to make additional changes to that salary schedule if necessary when the recruitment process ends.

Also, at our February 18th meeting, the Board of the Oakhurst Geological Hazard Abatement District (GHAD) selected a new Chair, Jeff Wan and Vice Chair, Richard Enea.

After reviewing the annual engineer’s report, we determined that for the District to be able to make the necessary repairs, provide maintenance, and build a reserve, a ballot measure was in order to increase the assessment rates in the district.

The board approved moving forward with a ballot measure this spring with a proposed schedule of new rates for district residents. There will be a community outreach program to address

## In Case You Missed It..

Local News Items from [Claycord.com](http://Claycord.com) and Other Sources

### The New “Penny Lane” Townhomes On Clayton Rd. In Concord

If you haven’t noticed, they’re building more condos/townhomes on Clayton Rd. in Concord.



The “Penny Lane” townhome style condos will be three-story and will range from 1,610 to 2,466-square-feet. They’re located on Clayton Rd., across from the El Monte Shopping Center (Goodwill area).

### Wild Mushroom Warning



With the return of winter rains, park visitors may have noticed mushrooms popping up in the Regional Parks. Mushrooms are an ecologically important part of our — but some of them contain dangerous toxins.

The death cap (*Amanita phalloides*) and western destroying angel (*Amanita ocreata*) are two of the world’s most toxic mushrooms, and both can be found in East Bay Regional Parks during the rainy season.

Both mushrooms can be lethal to humans and pets if consumed. They are mainly associated with oak trees and can be found growing anywhere oak roots are present.

### Congressman DeSaulnier Named Top Democrat On House Ethics Committee

Congressman Mark DeSaulnier (CA-10) has been appointed to serve as the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Ethics for the 119th Congress by Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries.

The House Committee on Ethics is unique among all House committees in that it is a bipartisan committee consisting of 10 Members, five from each of the two national political parties and Chaired by a Member from whichever party is in the majority in the House.

questions and concerns and increase awareness about the District funding challenges. More information on this will be coming in March.

At the February Budget & Audit committee meeting, co-chairs, myself and Vice Mayor Wan, reviewed the City’s midyear budget and determined that there were several items that needed to be included in the presentation before it comes to the full City Council on March 4th, including an in-depth summary and analysis of where the City is and the anticipated financial outcome for the end of the year, ending on June 30, 2025. The City

Congressman DeSaulnier has served on the House Ethics Committee since 2023.

### Clayton Council to Explore Governance Training

For years City of Clayton has suffered from high staff turnover. Councilmember Holly Tillman has repeatedly asked Council for an independent investigation since October 2023. She felt it was the actions of some of the other councilmembers behavior responsible for the high turnover.

In a March 11, 2024, a Clayton Pioneer editorial by Tamara Steiner elevated the drama stating the “City is in decline” and called for a Grand Jury investigation.

“Clayton City Hall is in chaos. It’s time for the Contra Costa Grand Jury to step in for a close look at City Council governance and the behavior of some individual councilmembers.”

Bringing civility to the issue, Mayor Trupiano arranged a meeting between herself, Tillman, City Manager Kris Louftus, and City Attorney Mala Sagramanian on January 28th to review the turnover.

According to a post on [ClaytonWatch.org](http://ClaytonWatch.org) which is no fan of Tillman, “It was determined that no investigation would take place, as we all knew there were no valid complaints from current or former staff that would warrant such an inquiry. The turnover in city staff stemmed from one primary issue: poor leadership and mismanagement by previous city managers... (whose) styles caused the turmoil at City Hall, not the actions of certain council members or public inquiries.”

Also, as a result of that meeting, Mayor Trupiano and Tillman formed an ad hoc committee with the council’s unanimous approval in order to facilitate a governance training workshop for Council and staff. Tillman stated to Councilmember Jeff Wan in that meeting that the ad hoc committee and training satisfies her previous requests for an independent investigation.

However, Tillman told the Diablo Gazette, “I will let people know if it’s resolved based on council members’ behavior in the future. Now, the rubber will hit the road once we find the person to do the training and if all five council members show up for the training and actually complete it. It’s baby steps.”

staff is also actively working on the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget and the Budget & Audit committee will review that soon.

Finally, our job search for five open positions resulted in over 200 applications and our City staff is reviewing those now and getting ready to schedule interviews. Staff has remarked that there are some outstanding candidates amongst the applications and they are hoping to have all positions filled by May.

If you would like to reach me, please contact me at 925.673.7324 or [kimt@claytonca.gov](mailto:kimt@claytonca.gov). **Stronger Together!**

# JOURNEY-MAN'S JOURNAL

by Jill Hedgecock

# Close Encounters Thrill at Galapagos Islands



I was over the moon when my dream vacation to visit the Galapagos Islands became a reality. Although land-based tours of the Galapagos Islands are possible, where you sleep in hotels by night and shuttle between the islands by day, taking a cruise provides more opportunities to see diverse types of wildlife and the flexibility to visit the remote islands. Budget cruises can offer similar itineraries, but they provide less cabin space (often bunk beds) and basic food choices.

Since I am an avid birder and this was a bucket-list trip, my husband and I chose to book an eight-day luxury cruise with Royal Galapagos. This small tour of fifteen guests allowed for a personalized experience.

Wildlife enthusiasts will not be disappointed given that 80% of the land birds and 97% of the reptiles on the Galapagos are found nowhere else on the planet due to its isolation from human contact and scientific importance to Darwin's theory of natural selection.

But close encounters with wildlife were not the only reason my expectations were far exceeded. Culinary delights, the ship's crew's attentiveness, and the knowledge and enthusiasm of our naturalist, Alejandra Camacho (who often said after an excursion, "This is not typical,") contributed to making this trip extraordinary.

As I snorkeled along a lava reef at Moreno Point, colorful hogfish, blue parrotfish, and rainbow wrasses wowed me.

Hundreds of yellowtail surgeon fish, each about the size of my forearm, swimming in tight formation, were also spectacular.

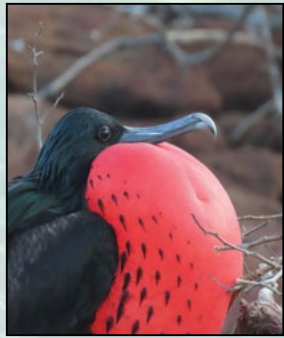
Five Galapagos sea lions tumbled in circles around our group. Some approached close enough to touch, arching their bodies to travel upside down and blow bubbles in our faces. Two sea lions interacted with a green sea turtle while two others played chase, one nipping the tailfin of his companion.

Meanwhile, a Galapagos penguin dove into the water from the adjacent lava rocks to join the underwater foray. During this show, I drifted to a shallow shelf with only a few feet of water below me. One giant turtle swam so close underneath me I had to suck in my stomach to avoid touching it.

During a dinghy excursion along the cliff face of Vincent Roca Point on Isabela Island, we saw blue-footed and Nazca booby birds while our guide spotted a red-footed booby. It was a remarkable sighting as these birds are typically found on Genovesa and San Cristobal Islands located 126 and 180 miles away, respectively.

Camacho explained boobies got their unusual name from a mispronunciation of the Spanish word "bobo" which means stupid — a label given to the birds by early explorers because they did not fly away when approached.

My favorite wildlife encounter occurred on Chinese Hat Islet. Two juvenile sea lions rushed to join us as we disembarked our dinghy, breaking the "six-foot distance rule" given to tourists. One of the sea lion's fascination with my hiking pole brought him so close that before I stepped away, his whiskers brushed my knee, a moment I will never forget.



hikes, kayaking, and amazing dining. Our hikes included visits to Sierra Negra, a volcano caldera that is the second largest volcanic crater in the world, as well as climbing 370 steps to an iconic viewpoint on Bartolome Islet and trekking across fascinating lava bed formations. Also,

other place like it in the world.

Many land and cruise options are available to visit the Galapagos. Our itinerary aboard Cormorant II included six different western islands. For a personalized experience, luxury tours came with a hefty price tag, but we were glad we splurged on this once-in-a-lifetime experience. To learn more about Royal Galapagos tours visit [www.royalgalapagos.com](http://www.royalgalapagos.com).

*Jill Hedgecock has a master's degree in Environmental Management and a bachelor's degree in biology. Her love of nature inspired her to write the award-winning novel, Rhino in the Room and the sequel, Queen of the Rhino. Her books are available on amazon.com.*

*Photos courtesy of Alejandro Camach, Jill and Eric Hedgecock. To view more photos of Jill's trip to Galapagos Island and its wildlife, go to our website [diablogazette.com](http://diablogazette.com)*

believed. Yellow iguanas went extinct on Santiago Island after mariners introduced livestock and disappeared from Baltra Island after the construction of a World War II United States military base. Fortunately, reintroduction efforts have re-established yellow iguanas on these islands.

No trip to the Galapagos would be complete without seeing giant tortoises and marine iguanas. We visited two different tortoise breeding centers. Their size alone makes these adorable creatures a fascinating sight. They are indeed huge. On Fernandina Island, our morning hike brought us in close contact with clusters of marine iguanas.

Other notable sightings included reef sharks, stingrays, mating spotted eagle rays, Darwin's finches, and many other bird species. While changes in beak shapes among the seventeen species of finches across the islands are attributed to Darwin's formation of his theory of natural selection, differences between the four Galapagos mockingbird species actually triggered his scientific discovery. The adaptation of the flightless cormorant's stunted wings almost seems like a disfigurement, but their stunted appendages allow them to dive deeper to catch fish.

In addition to snorkeling excursions, our itinerary included

The Galapagos Islands are not as untouched by humans as I had

We were all given a turn at the ship's helm near the equator crossing, which was an interesting experience.

Each delicious meal included a mix of traditional Ecuadorian cuisine and standard American fare. During our last excursion, we walked among nesting frigatebirds and swallow-tailed gulls at sunrise. The symphony of male frigatebirds fluttering their inflated red gular sacs felt otherworldly, an appropriate ending to our Galapagos adventure. Truly, there is no

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## How long does it take to get my home ready to sell?

Frequently asked questions like this are easy to answer, but they rely on other factors. What are those factors?

**Deferred Maintenance** — Is there any deferred maintenance on the home, like peeling paint or trims, floor damage or stains, old carpeting, paint or patches, windows leaking or broken, etc. These are first on the list to get handled as they are a baseline to make your home sound so that someone wants to buy it. Their lender, if they get a loan, wants the home habitable, with all components working, to make a loan in most cases.

**Inspections and Reports and Disclosures?** — Have you had the presale inspections of pest, home inspection, chimney, roof, sewer, etc.? Some inspection companies do several of these at the same time, while others have separate inspectors for their specific inspection type. The benefit to a seller to doing inspections up front is that if there are things, small or large that might be a problem, you will know prior to having a buyer. You can deal with any issues the way you choose. If you wait until you have a buyer, then they will have a voice as to how it is to be handled.

**Are you moving out prior to going to market? When do you need to be gone/sold?** — Are you purchasing another home, or have a deadline to be somewhere? Are you going to be staging your home? The more of your things in the home, the longer it will take to relocate some items to make rooms look larger and make closets about half empty so it looks like a lot of space. Do you need to paint or install

flooring before you stage, if that is your desire? The coordination of all of that takes more time than if you were already to go.

The short answer is; your home can be ready for market in a few days to a few weeks, depending on your timeline. How ready you are, and are the above items being coordinated. That's what successful Realtors do... coordinate your home sale. Much of a Seller's Real Estate Professional's work happens prior to market, if you have a very proactive Realtor.

They will go over bids, budgets and timelines to help you decide what needs to be done. They typically have teams of folks to help with the various tasks. It's not putting up a sign and waiting for offers. That can be evidenced by the dilemma of the two houses in the same subdivision, one that sells quickly and at a high price, versus the other sitting there. Your professionals know the things that make a difference to buyers. They are out there talking to buyers on a daily basis feeling the pulse of the local market.

Those of us who love our work and have a passion and determination to assist clients through a very trying time are committed to managing expectations, planning at your pace, and alleviating as much of the stress as possible. (Buying or selling and remodeling are on the list of Top Stressors in Life.) In essence, a great Realtor is a valued partner in your move. Find one of those. And have a great move.

## Roof and Realm Revolutionizing Home Building

Could it be what Roof and Realm of Concord will do for housing is what Henry Ford did for auto manufacturing?

Maybe that's hyperbole. But in speaking with Roof and Realm CEO, Fatima Shahid, her vision for the company has similarities. Roof and Realm builds homes in their factory to California state building code and Title 24 requirements.

"We started our company in February 2017. We wanted to do modular housing because we were forward thinking, and we understood that this is the future of housing," she exclaims.

After three years of research and development, they built their first home, an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in Union City in 2020. "ADUs were a really good introduction for the consumer to really understand modular."

With the growing demand for ADUs, they began building bigger two- and three-story ADUs which was really to prepare them for building two-story and three-story single-family homes, their main focus today.

"Every industry in our country has been revolutionized in some way, right? We are well ahead of the industry. We are able to ship all over California."

Roof and Realm's factory construction process is highly efficient. Additionally, the steel structure provides an added advantage in terms of fire resistance. Every model in their collection can be customized with custom colors and finishes.

"We want to revolutionize housing in ways that we can control," Shahid explains.

This means they can manufacture a high-quality, fire-resistant product, control manufacturing costs and shorten a project's time by about 40%. The estimated timeline from order to installation is approximately six months with city permits or 60 days without permits.

Their three- to five-year plan is to have their product available for delivery throughout the United States. "You can ship these on trains to anywhere in the country."

To do that effectively, their factory will need automation. "Our goal is to enter into a factory setting that is about 100,000 square feet and, throughout several phases, implement robotics and automation so that we can speed up the build timeline." They are currently in the process of looking for such space.

"We are still doing a really healthy amount of ADUs, but I would say the demand for single-family homes of all sizes is about as strong if not stronger than the demand for ADUs. That's really the message I want the public to know, that there are better options."

They offer wholesale pricing to contractors and also build commercial properties. "As soon as we expand our factory, our goal is to also enter the multifamily market as well."

Given the rising costs of housing, it's no surprise that ADUs and prefabricated homes are becoming a preferred choice for many homeowners. Roof and Realm is at the dawn of a housing revolution.

Learn more, see floor plans and their designs at [Roofandrealm.com](http://Roofandrealm.com).

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# calendar of events

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*Pleasant Hill Library, 2 Monticello Avenue, Pleasant Hill.*

**March 9th, Independent Spirits Doll Club**, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM. Zio Fraedo's Restaurant, 611 Gregory Ln, [www.DollShowUSA.com](http://www.DollShowUSA.com)

## Martinez

**March 20, George Cole Trio** at Roxx on Main, 6PM-8PM. The George Cole Trio show is guaranteed to delight audiences with outstanding musicianship, fan-favored original music, and the best great American songbook selections. Reservations. 925.370.7699. Roxx On Main, 627 Main Street, Downtown Martinez, [www.RoxxonMain.com](http://www.RoxxonMain.com)

**March 29, International Swan Day**. 10AM - 4PM., featuring 20+ local women artists. This is a FREE event with live music, arts and crafts on exhibit and for sale. MRC Clubhouse, 1635 Pacheco Blvd, Martinez [www.martinezarts.org/](http://www.martinezarts.org/)

**March 29, 2025 Rock Out Hunger Gala**, 5:30PM-10:30PM. Rock Out Hunger 2025, Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa's annual fundraising gala. Blackhawk Country Club 599 Blackhawk Club Dr. Danville. Tickets: [loavesfishescc.ejoinme.org/RockOutHunger2025](http://loavesfishescc.ejoinme.org/RockOutHunger2025)

## At the Martinez Campbell Theater

> **March 8, The Island of Beyond**. 2:30PM. "The Island of Beyond" is a new play adapted from the young adult novel by Elizabeth Atkinson.

> **March 9, Partners in Crime**, 2:30PM

> **March 22, Tom Goss Bear-Friends Forever Tour**. 8PM.

Tom Goss is an LA-based singer-songwriter known for his expertly crafted songs about the joys and struggles of modern love.

> **March 30, Renegade**

**Orchestra**, 2PM. The Beauty of a Symphony, the Soul of a Rock Band-it's time to throw out all the old conventions of a quiet, sleepy, stuffy show of musicians locked in straight jackets of tradition.

> **April 1, The Uninvited and The Taylor Brothers and Friends**, 7:30PM.

*Martinez Campbell Theater  
636 Ward St, Martinez,  
[www.campbelltheater.com](http://www.campbelltheater.com)*

## Walnut Creek

**March 1, Headlands Brewing Grand Opening**. 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. Southern corner of Oak & Wayne, 2999 Oak Road, Suite A, Walnut Creek.

live bands playing:

**March 7, 28, April 11, 25. Merry Mixers Upcoming Dances** with live bands playing. [merrymixers.life](http://merrymixers.life)  
**March 14, Therapist Speed**

**Dating**. 6:30-9:30PM. Come meet a variety of therapists in one night, like speed dating but for building connections and networking! The Caring Group Counseling Center, 2835 Mitchell Drive, Walnut Creek

**March 16, Walnut Creek Wedding Fair**. Noon - 4 PM.

Renaissance Hotel and Bay Club, 2805 Jones Road Walnut Creek

**March 19, Karaoke Night**, 9PM-1 AM. Free admission with RSVP. Retro Junkie: 2112 N. Main St. Walnut Creek

**March 19, Spring Fling, Tastes & Toast**. 5:30-8:30PM. Taste & Toast is more than an event - it's a lively fusion of flavor, community, and purpose, bringing together our love for local schools and the vibrant heart of downtown Walnut Creek. 30+ Food & Beverage Tastings. Live Music and Student Performances. Support for Local Schools. Reserve your tickets now! Broadway Plaza Fountain, Walnut Creek.

**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/](http://gardenshf.org/)

## At the Leshner Center

> **March 6-7, DLUX Puppets' Peter Pan**, Fly into Neverland with Wendy, Peter Pan and Tinker Bell in this new original, multimedia adaptation!

> **March 7-8, Best of San Francisco Stand-Up Comedy**, A new generation of comedic talent!

> **March 7, A Tribute To Henry Mancini**, The timeless classics of Henry Mancini, from \*The Pink Panther\* to \*Peter Gunn\* and beyond, performed by the 20-piece Luca & Lucca Orchestra.

> **March 8, A Tribute to Billy Joel with Billy Nation**.

> **March 9, Keep Calm and Trust Band Music Presented by Contra Costa Wind Symphony and BDWinds**, 2-3:30PM.

> **March 13-16, Once Upon A Time: The Adventures of Goldilocks and Little Red Presented by Fantasy Forum Actors Ensemble**.

> **March 18, Newsmakers: Marlee Matlin & Henry Winkler** 7:30-9PM

> **March 21, Sisters Easter Catechism: Will My Bunny Go To Heaven** 7:30-9:15PM

> **March 25, Spring Concert** 7:30-9pm.

> **March 28-29, Diablo Ballet's Swan Lake Suite**

> **April 3-13, Synergy Theater brings Improvised Dungeons and Dragons**.

> **April 4, Come Together: The Beatles Concert Experience** 7:30-9PM

*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](http://www.lesherartscenter.org)*

**SUBMIT YOUR CALENDAR ENTRIES** by the 20th of the month before Issue month. [diablogazette@gmail.com](mailto:diablogazette@gmail.com)

## Clayton

**March 8, Beginner Class, Diablo Bowmen**. 9-10:30 AM. An excellent starting point for anyone interested in exploring the sport of archery. Diablo Bowmen Oak Hill Lane, Clayton. [diablo-bowmen.org](http://diablo-bowmen.org)

**March 14-23, Clayton Theatre Company presents "Noises Off"** by Michael Frayn. only 9 shows! Endeavor Hall 6008 Center St., Clayton. [claytontheatrecompany.com](http://claytontheatrecompany.com)

**March 20, The Diablo Numismatic Society meeting**. 7PM -9PM. Clayton Community Library, 6125 Clayton Rd, Clayton

**March 22, Diamond Art Painting. Adult Program**.

3-4:30 pm. Unleash your creativity in a serene 90-minute session. All supplies provided. Registration required. 925-673-0659. [ccclib.org](http://ccclib.org)

**March 30, Spring Bloom & Birds**. 9AM - noon. Join us for a wildflower and birding hike at Chaparral Spring. Join us for a hike with EBRPD Naturalist Kevin Dixon along new single-track trails in the beautiful Chaparral Spring area. Chaparral Spring Clayton Community Park, Clayton. [savemountdiablo.org](http://savemountdiablo.org)

**April 26-27, Clayton Art And Wine Festival**, FREE. Sat 10am-7pm, Sun 10am-5pm. 6055 Main Street, Clayton

## 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](http://www.bambinosconcord.com)

**March 14, Kid's Night Out - St. Patrick's Day Edition**, 6 - 9PM, Get ready for a lucky night of fun filled with gymnastics, games, crafts, and more! Fee. Signup: [info@eastbaygymnastics.com](mailto:info@eastbaygymnastics.com). East Bay Gymnastics, 1441 Franquette Ave., Concord

**March 15, Sock Hop Dance**, 4-8PM. A Nostalgic Evening at Our Sock Hop Dance! Dust off your poodle skirts and leather jackets, and step back in time to the fabulous '50s. Fee: \$55-60. Our scholarship program helps seniors who have limited income participate in activities so they can stay connected

to the community! Concord Senior Center, 2727 Parkside Circle, Concord

**March 20, Concord Historical Society Membership Dinner**, 5-9 PM. Dinner catered by Derry Englund Guest Speaker - Carol Jensen, Historian. \$55 pp. 1926 Clayton Road, 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.

**March 30, Contra Costa Con Star Wars Celebration**, 10 AM-6PM. This show celebrates all things STAR WARS with figures from the Star Wars family on hand to greet their fans. Hilton Concord Hotel, 1970 Diamond Blvd., Concord, **Tell them you saw it in the Diablo Gazette**.

**April 12, Egg-Straordinary Egg Hunt**, 1:30 - 3:30 PM. Splash around and hunt for eggs in our shallow water short course lanes. Once you have gathered all your eggs, enjoy arts and crafts and games on the grass! \$13 Residents of Concord/ \$18 Non-Residents of Concord. Concord Community Pool, 3501 Cowell Rd. Concord

**April 19, The Bay's Cutest Easter Egg Hunt!** 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Kids 12 and under will have the ultimate Easter experience searching for Easter Eggs surrounded by some of their favorite characters! Our EXCLUSIVE Easter Harajuku Tote will be filled with candy and fun items from Pokemon, Labubu, Sonny Angels, Cappybara, Stitch, and more! Plus you don't want to miss a photo opportunity with the Easter Bunny and TOTORO! Admission: \$0 - \$24 Todos Santos Plaza, 2175 Willow Pass Rd., Concord

## Pleasant Hill

### Pleasant Hill Library

March 04, Bubble Sam 6:00pm-7:30pm, Bubble Sam will perform an assortment of amazing bubble tricks and put people (kids and adults) into giant bubbles! All ages welcome.



# Still Coughing? Reset Your System and Breathe Easy Again

You've made it through the worst of the flu; fever is down, energy is creeping back, but that cough just won't quit. It's like your brain forgot how to breathe properly. Well, guess what? That's exactly what's happening.

Your brain patterns breathing just like it patterns movement. And since you take about 21,000 breaths a day, even a small shift in how you breathe can create substantial changes, fast.

But if you don't actively reset this pattern, it can keep shifting in the wrong direction for weeks or even months, leading to tighter breathing and more coughing, neck and back tension, and/or less oxygen to the brain — causing brain fog, fatigue, and feeling "off."

The good news is you can fix this. Here are three simple, science-backed tools to help you fully recover and reset your system.

## 1) Belly Breathing: Rewire Your Respiratory System

After an illness, your brain often shifts to shallow, chest-dominant breathing. This not only keeps the cough reflex on high alert, but it also stiffens the mid-back, weakens the core, and messes with posture.

Belly breathing teaches your brain to relax the airway, expand the lungs fully, and deliver more oxygen where it is needed. Plus, deep breathing naturally moves lymph helping to clear out leftover congestion and inflammation.

To do this, place one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest. As you inhale, the goal is to maximize movement in the belly and minimize movement in the chest. This may be challenging at

first.

Try and maintain a long spine throughout the breath, but especially on the exhale.

Coughing can pull us forward, so this can be a powerful reset for posture.



## 2) Bag Breathing: Reset Your Carbon Dioxide Balance

A lingering cough can disrupt the delicate balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in your blood. Too much over-breathing (like coughing and shallow breaths) can drop CO<sub>2</sub> levels, making it harder for your body to use oxygen efficiently. That's why you might feel brain fog, tightness, or like you're constantly trying to catch your breath.

Try combining bag breathing with belly breathing for an even bigger reset. By breathing into a bag while focusing on belly expansion, you reinforce optimal breathing mechanics and restore CO<sub>2</sub> balance at the same time. A few rounds of this can calm the cough reflex and give your nervous system the green light to relax.

Grab a paper lunch sack, or a plastic produce bag and seal it over your face, then breathe.

## 3) Lymph Work: Clear Out the Leftover Gunk

Your lymphatic system is responsible for draining out the last bits of inflammation and waste after an illness. But your lymph does not move unless you do. If it gets sluggish, you stay swollen, foggy, and fatigued way longer than necessary. Fortunately, you don't need a full workout to get it moving.

Skin Brushing — gentle rubbing or using a tool like a dry brush helps activate lymph flow without needing big movement. This is good to do all over the body, but especially around the areas of the body impacted by a cough such as the chest, back, collar bones, the neck, and the face. Lymph nodes don't like pressure, so keep it very light.

Breathing drills naturally move lymph by expanding and contracting your diaphragm.

An easy 5-minute walk gives your lymph system a boost and helps reset your nervous system.

To sum it up, your nervous system is adaptable. You don't have to stay stuck in post-cold/flu mode. With the right inputs, i.e., breathing drills, CO<sub>2</sub> resets, and gentle lymph work, you can reprogram your recovery and feel clear, strong, and fully yourself again.

While it is common for coughs to persist for up to four weeks, with the current flu/cold bugs going around, if you have any concerns or if your symptoms worsen, please check in with your doctor.

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or call 844.323.1150



# Dogman

If you know a young person, you are probably already familiar with the character of "Dog Man" from the famous book series written by Dav Pilkey. If you are not, you are in for a treat. The film adaptation offers fun and laughs for young and old alike.

Like many superhero movies, "Dog Man" begins as an origin story. A tragic accident creates the opportunity for an unlikely surgery that combines a dog's head with the body of his best friend, Officer Knight. The combination creates a super crime fighting cop who can be distracted by squirrels or a tennis ball.

Dog Man's main nemesis is Petey the Cat (Pete Davidson). Petey has a super evil lab in the city where he builds machines that can destroy buildings and wreak havoc all over town. Petey decides that he needs a partner, but since he does not know anyone as evil as himself, he purchases a cloning machine. To Petey's dismay, the cloning machine produces a kitten that will need time to grow up.

The film has something to say about fatherhood and how important it is to show up for your children. Petey finds himself reluctantly thrust into being a parent and once we meet his father, we understand he did not have a good role model. This is not delivered in a heavy-handed way. It simply becomes apparent as the plot progresses. We also see the



importance of a support system and how other people in your life (or maybe dogs) can help ease the burden of raising a family, if we let them.

It is not all easy for Dog Man. Although he is a great cop, he still misses his old lives. His human half has lost his girlfriend, and his dog half no longer has a best friend. He also constantly drives the police chief (Lil Rel Howery) crazy and

keeps Sarah Hatoff (Isla Fisher), a crack reporter, on her toes.

The overall look of the film is a graphic novel brought to life. The colors are vibrant and the action scenes are in your face with explosions, robots, and skyscrapers turned into destructive monsters. The movie certainly speaks to young kids, as it resembles a story drawn and written by a child. For adults, the silly humor can provide a welcome escape from daily stresses.

"Dog Man" comes from a joyful place. It reminds us of a time when we made art because it was fun, and we created ridiculous stories because they made us and our friends laugh. Any film that can capture such an exuberant time in life is worthy of an hour and twenty-nine minutes of your viewing time.

In Theaters



# 'Where They Last Saw Her'

## by Marcie R. Rendon

"Where They Last Saw Her" (Bantam, 2024, paperback, 336 pages, \$14.40) by Marcie R. Rendon is the story of a Native American mother named Quill who dreams of running in the Boston Marathon. On one fateful day after embarking on a long-distance run, she enters the frozen woods that are part of the Red Pine reservation. She hears a scream and suspects yet another Native American woman has fallen victim to the oil pipeline contractors who work not far from her Minnesota home. Frustrated by law enforcement's lack of response, she becomes an amateur sleuth, searching the woods for clues. She pockets a single beaded earring she finds and tracks down the artist who helps uncover the woman's identity. After a second woman disappears, Quill becomes obsessed with finding the men who are committing these crimes against local women, ignoring the cost to her marriage and children.

Rendon does a fabulous job of painting the realities of life on a reservation in the dead of an icy Minnesota winter. Her cast of characters include her husband, Crow, her two young children, and two fellow running buddies, Gaylyn and Punk. While Rendon's actions are sometimes reckless, her determination to break down the "bystander culture" that perpetuates crimes against Native American women is admirable. Although Quill's actions and the consequences she incurs sometimes stretch the limits of believability, I appreciated the courage of this character, and the lengths Quill took to protect vulnerable women from becoming victims of violence.

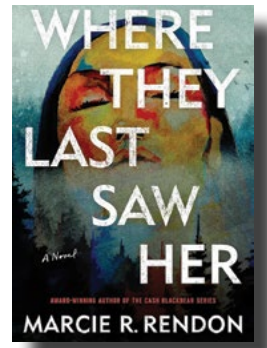
This entertaining novel also serves to raise awareness about the kidnapping, murder, and trafficking of Native American

women. In the Author's Note, Rendon cites real-life statistics about the alarming number of indigenous women and girls (1,181) who have gone missing or were murdered over a thirty-year span. Many of these crimes remain unsolved.

"When They Last Saw Her" was a national bestseller, a Washington Post, and a Book Riot Best Book of the Year. Fans of Louise Erdrich's thrillers and Tony Hillerman's novels will likely enjoy Rendon's books.

Marcie R. Rendon, a citizen of the White Earth Nation, is a Native American playwright, poet, author, and community arts activist. She is the author of two children's nonfiction books and three other crime fiction novels. She was identified in "O: The Oprah Magazine" as one of 31 Native American Authors to Read Right Now.

Rendon was also a McKnight Distinguished Artist Award winner. Her debut novel, "Murder on the Red River" received the Pinckley Prize for Debut Novel Award and was a finalist for the Western Writers of America Spur Award, Contemporary Novel category. "Girl Gone Missing" was nominated for the G. P. Putnam's Sons Sue Grafton Memorial Award. Adler University awarded Rendon an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters by in 2020. Her primary residence is in Minneapolis.



## 3 Exquisite Dining Experiences at Luna Restaurant

### March 16th and 17th: SAINT PATRICK'S DAY



\$38 per person, Three Course Dinner at 5:00 PM

~ Green Salad, with cucumber avocado, goat cheese and Fuji apples

~ Corn Beef and Cabbage

~ Dessert: Irish Bread Pudding with a warm whiskey caramel sauce



### March 26th: French Dinner

\$75 per person, Five Courses



~ French Onion Soup | ~ Escargot | ~ Salad Niçoise

**Entrees choices**

~ Beef Bourguignon | ~ Duck a L'Orange | ~ Salmon Roulade | ~ Coq au vin

**Desserts**

~ Vanilla Crème Brûlée | ~ Chocolate Eclair | ~ Tarte Tatin

### March 12th: Private Dinner with Chef Habib Jacifi

Private Dinner \$110, Six Courses

~ Grilled Octopus Salad

~ Spinach Ricotta Cheeseball

~ Porcini Mushroom Ravioli with Truffle Oil

~ Grilled Lamb Chop served with Potato Dauphinoise

~ Chilean Seabass served with Parsnip Purée

~ Duo Dessert: Raspberry Panna Cotta & Chocolate Mousse Frappe



2118 Willow Pass Rd. Concord

(925) 691-4080

Call or Reserve Online for the event you would like to attend. www.lunarestaurant.us



# The Arts Page

## It's a Good Job to be a Dream Maker



Mark Jezierny cloud painting demo

You can learn a lot when auditing others teaching art students. Mark Jezierny has taught art classes for a long time. "I've been around for 36 years and some of the places I remember (teaching) are the Pleasant Hill Recreation Department, Mount Diablo Adult Education, Moraga Park and Recreation, Lafayette Community Center, a store called Art Ability in Orinda, Walnut Creek Civic Arts, and Acalanes, to name a few," he said to me while teaching a class at the Mount Diablo Adult Education.

As he walked between artists' worktables offering suggestions, I noticed that each student was working on something different and of their own liking. There were watercolors, acrylics, oil paintings, charcoal drawings, pet portraits, ocean scenes, barns and landscapes. There was so much to see.

I especially enjoyed observing Mark's demonstrations on how to paint clouds.

One demonstration was in oil paint and another was in acrylic paint.

Mark is a teacher who is not afraid to engage with his students and work with them. When asked what he enjoys most about teaching he quickly responded, "Wow, there are so many good things about making people feel encouraged. I once heard this saying, 'there are dream makers and dream takers'. It's a good job to be a dream maker."

The community is lucky to have Mark share his talent and love of keeping dreams alive through art.

The Mark Jezierny and Students Show will open March 8 with a reception from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. The public is always welcome. Drinks refreshments and live music will be available.

Along with Mark and his students, aRt Cottage is featuring The Three Amigas as our guest artists. Sharon McKeon, Stefanie Sylvester, and Marsha Mees are from the Brentwood area and will be surprising you with their eclectic art in both 3D and 2D.

aRt Cottage is located at 2238 Mount Diablo Street in Concord. We are open Wednesday through Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



Benicia State Park by Mark Jezierny



Rebirth by Marsha Mees

## March Madness at Main Street Arts!

Throughout the month of March, in addition to an all-new show by the gallery members, Main Street Arts (MSA) presents guest artist, Connie Millholland. Millholland's artwork depicts ordinary moments of human interaction.

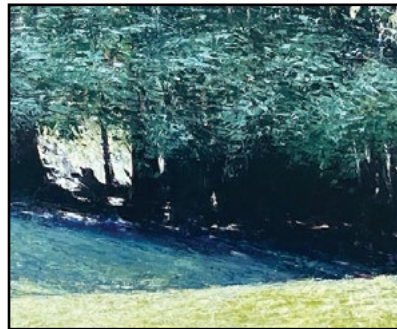
"My paintings reveal my emotions," she explains. "The scenes tell stories in which the viewer can empathize, or they can relate to the painting and create their own story." Millholland's works will be displayed at MSA from March 7 until April 27.

Meet Connie Millholland at the reception on Friday, March 7, during Martinez First Fridays.

During March, MSA has dedicated a wall to celebrating Spring and Pam McCauley is offering art classes March through April.

Each month, the gallery gives away an original piece of artwork. Lucky winner, Anastasia Gellepes, won a painting by Bonnie Fry in January. A glass wall clock, by Jerry Hild, was the prize in February. In March a metal sculpture by Nate, aka Bronze Holbein will be given away. To enter, one only needs to sign up for the free drawing when they visit the gallery.

Main Street Arts is located at 613 Main Street, Martinez. Open Wednesday-Saturday 11:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m., Sunday 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. and during Martinez First Fridays 6:00-9:00 p.m. Learn more at [www.mainstreetarts.net](http://www.mainstreetarts.net).



Tilden Park No. 4 by Dean Evans



In the Wind by Connie Millholland



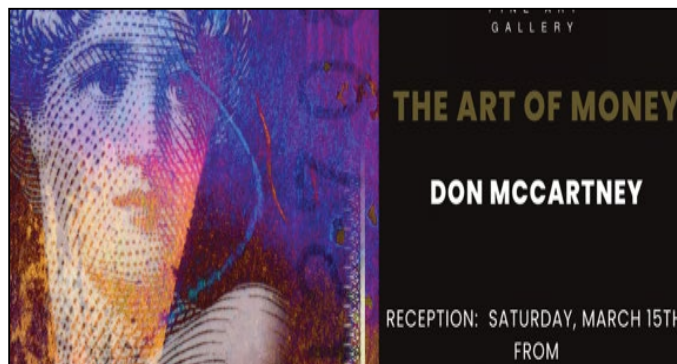
Mobile by Olga Jusidman

## The Art of Money Exhibit at Jor Gallery

"Art of Money" is the new exhibit at Jor Gallery by Artist and Graphic Designer, Don McCartney, starting Wednesday, March 12 and continuing until Sunday, April 27, 2025.

The opening reception is on Saturday, March 15, 2025, from 4:00-6:00 p.m.

Jor Gallery is located at 1026 Oak St. in Clayton.



## General Meeting and Art Demo to Feature Dave Wagner



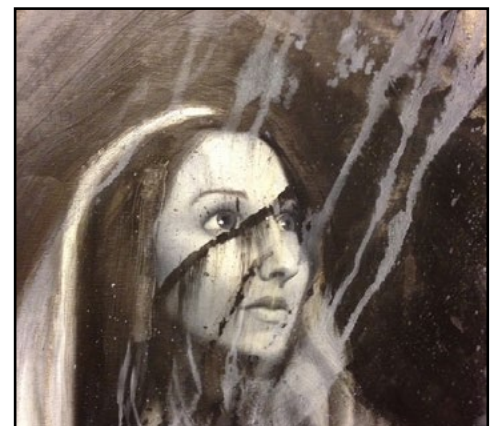
Alamo Danville Artists' Society General Meeting and Art Demo will be held on March 11, at 7:30 p.m. at the Blackhawk Gallery, 3416 Blackhawk Circle in Danville featuring artist Dave Wagner.

Wagner's artistic journey began in high school when the Sacramento Comic Press published a series of humorous cartoons, later featured in a traveling exhibition. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Graphic Design from Cal Poly in 2000 and a Master of Fine Arts from the New York Academy of Art in 2013.

As lead designer and artist, Wagner created a twelve-piece series of large-scale digital paintings for the Stratosphere Casino in Las Vegas. He was also among five artists selected to travel to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where he painted wall and ceiling murals for a new Four Seasons Hotel owned by the Saudi Royal family. Other creative projects include designing an album cover for Bon Jovi.

His paintings have been exhibited across the United States, and he is currently developing a graphic novel.

He currently teaches at Las Positas College as an Art Professor and Discipline Coordinator.





# Spring into Green

I am so inspired by the beautiful green hills at springtime; I put together a menu with bright green ingredients and paired them with “green” beverages.

Cocktails are a festive way to start any evening. The Green and Gold cocktail recipe starts with verjuice, the non-alcoholic juice from the green harvest of grapes. A green harvest is performed when the winemaker chooses to reduce the crop mid-way through the season by removing some grape clusters from each vine. The remaining grapes receive all the energy of the plant and their flavor is intensified.

Asian flavors pair well with this cocktail because of its sweet and sour profile. I like it with Chicken Won Tons. A sweet sauce is important to offset the tart beverage.

Vinho Verde literally means green wine. It is made in Portugal, is slightly effervescent and comes in red, white, and rosé. The white wines are light yellow or slightly peachy in color, have a level of alcohol between 8.5 to 11%, and are made from local grape varieties. Pair the white variety with an entrée salad like a Prawn Salad with Cilantro Vinaigrette for a light, springtime meal. If you can't find Vinho Verde, Sauvignon Blanc will substitute nicely.

For fun, I found a unique recipe for a Fennel Cake with Anise Syrup. It has an almost pudding-like texture. It would be fun to try with Absinthe because experiencing different mediums that deliver similar flavors is often interesting.

So, go on. Pair Up!

*Maria Terry is a Certified Sommelier and Wine Educator in Northern California. [LaSommeliere@gmail.com](mailto:LaSommeliere@gmail.com)*

## GREEN AND GOLD

### INGREDIENTS

- (1) 750ml bottle verjuice
- 2 cups brandy
- 40 oz. ginger beer
- 2 fresh limes sliced

### DIRECTIONS

Mix verjuice, brandy and ginger ale in large pitcher. Pour over glasses filled with ice and add two slices of lime to each glass and serve.

Yield: 8 servings

## PRAWN SALAD WITH CILANTRO VINAIGRETTE

### INGREDIENTS

#### Salad:

- 8 large, cleaned, chilled prawns
- 1 avocado, sliced
- 1-2 slices of red onion, separated into rings
- 1 large tomato, cut into 1/8 wedges

#### Dressing:

- 1/2 cup of buttermilk
- 1/4 cup of olive oil mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup of sour cream
- 1/4 cup of fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 small jalapeno, seeds removed & chopped
- 1 green onion, chopped
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- Juice from 1/2 a lime
- 1/4 tsp. cumin
- 1/4 tsp. oregano

Sea salt and freshly cracked pepper, to taste

### DIRECTIONS

Blend the buttermilk, mayonnaise, sour cream, cilantro, jalapeno, green onion, minced garlic, lime juice, cumin, oregano, sea salt, and freshly cracked pepper, to taste, using an immersion blender until well combined and creamy. Set aside to let the flavors mingle.

Place some chopped romaine in a serving bowl and toss with the dressing. Arrange avocado, tomato and prawns artfully on top and drizzle on a bit more dressing overall.

Yield: 4 servings plus extra dressing

## FENNEL CAKE WITH ANISE SYRUP

### INGREDIENTS

#### Cake:

- 1 tablespoon fennel seeds
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 fennel bulb (8 ounces)—halved, cored and thinly sliced
- 1 cup whole blanched almonds, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup shelled unsalted pistachios
- 6 large eggs, separated
- 1 cup sugar

#### Syrup:

- 4 star anise pods
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon anise seeds
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 small fennel bulb—halved, cored and thinly sliced

Unsweetened whipped cream, for serving

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350°. Butter a 10-inch springform pan. Line the bottom of the pan with parchment paper and butter the paper. In a medium skillet, toast the fennel seeds until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate to cool. Melt the butter in the skillet. Add the fennel and cook over moderate heat until tender and golden brown, about 10 minutes. Let cool.

In a food processor, pulse the almonds until finely ground. Transfer to a small bowl. Repeat with the pistachios, adding them to the almonds. In a large bowl, using a handheld mixer, beat the egg yolks with the sugar at high speed until light in color, about 2 minutes. At low speed, blend in the toasted fennel seeds and the ground nuts. Stir in the cooked fennel.

In a large, stainless-steel bowl, beat the egg whites to firm peaks. Fold one-third of the beaten whites into the cake batter to lighten it and then fold in the remaining whites until no streaks of whites remain. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan, and bake for about 40 minutes, or until the cake is just set. Transfer the cake to a rack and let cool for 20 minutes.

In a small skillet, toast the star anise, fennel and anise seeds over moderate heat until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Add the water and sugar and bring to a boil. Add the sliced fennel, cover and simmer over low heat until translucent, about 20 minutes. Let cool until warm.

Remove the sides of the springform pan. Transfer the cake to a platter and cut it into wedges. Drizzle some syrup on the side and dollop whipped cream on top.

The cake can be kept at room temperature overnight. The syrup can be refrigerated overnight; bring to room temperature before serving.

Yield: 8 servings

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# Concord City Council Moves to Amend Just Cause and Rent Control Ordinance

In a packed Council Chamber, at its meeting on February 25, 2025, Concord City Council directed staff to prepare amendments to the Residential Tenant Protection Program in the following two ways:

Adjust the rent cap for multifamily units subject to the rent stabilization regulations from the current regulatory cap of 60% of CPI or 3%, whichever is lesser, to a flat maximum annual increase of 5%.

Landlords that own two or fewer rented homes or condominiums would be exempt from the just cause regulations. The current regulations apply to all rented single-family homes and rented condominiums.

Mayor Carlyn Obringer, and councilmembers



Laura Hoffmeister and Pablo Benavente voted for the amendment. Councilmember Dominic Aliano and Vice Mayor Laura Nakamura voted against the

change.

Staff will return to City Council on March 25 with a draft Ordinance that reflects these requested changes. The March 25 meeting will be a public meeting and public comment on the draft ordinance is invited. A second reading of the Ordinance would occur on April 22, and the amended Ordinance would be effective 30 days after, or on May 22.

The goal of the regulations is to stabilize the community and minimize displacement of residents, while also allowing property owners to make a fair return on their investments. More information on the program and the regulations can be viewed on the City's website.



**the concordian**

by Edi Birsan, [EdiBirsan@gmail.com](mailto:EdiBirsan@gmail.com)

## Questions Not Asked

In several recent contentious issues in Concord there has been a display of what I call Questions not Asked and Answers not Questioned. It is the responsibility of elected leadership to take both actions. While elections are about emotion, governance is about logic.

On Feb. 25, the Concord City Council voted 3 to 2 to amend the recently instated Residential Tenant Protection Ordinance to include only those single-family and condominiums that are part of an ownership of three or more units. Furthermore, the Cap on multifamily apartments is changed to a flat 5%.

It should be noted that at the start of their deliberations led by Pablo Benavente, the point was made and agreed that they do not have data on the effects of this program. Dominic Aliano made it clear that he was not going to make any changes because there was no data.

Using the issue of rent control, when trying to provide data for decisions around adjustments to rent caps or displacement costs, here are some questions that should be asked.

What has been the change in market-rate rents? Are they going up, down or are they stable? If rates are changing less than a cap allows, is the market being restrained?

For existing long-term rentals, how many landlords that have filed for relief and what have been the results of those filings?

Has there been a reduction in the number of rental offerings? What is the change in vacancy rate?

Has there been a significant increase in the number of single-family homes taken out of the rental market? Has this resulted in a decline in sale price because of the increase in supply (a pet theory of some)?

Has there been a deterioration of neighborhoods where there are older rental units? How do you measure that?

What is the number of and percent of corporate owned units versus that of individually owned single-family homes in the rental market? What is the operational difference

that is measurable between those groups? What has changed since the introduction of the ordinances?

What has been done to verify the accuracy of the data? Is the methodology inherently biased or prone to mis-categorization?

For example, asking why people left: Was it voluntary or was it because of additional fees raised, other than direct rent, that forced them out?

What is the experience in having 6- or 12-month leases broken by landlords to move in a family member?

Regarding potential displacement, considering long-term rental histories, with so many tenants on month-to-month leases, have tenants asked for a 6-month or 12-month new lease instead of month-to-month?

There has been no cap on single family rental units. Have we seen many instances of cancellations of monthly rates being replaced with significantly higher rates?

What is the value of the data presented? Is it reflective of the current situation or are we trying to talk through what was the case a year or more ago? Or is data trying to induce from the perceptions of other cities?

Considering the current state of the misinformation that is being propagated world-wide and the gross outright lies and distortions, I am often reminded of a phrase in public and private reports: "I can get any number I want except for one: the truth."

The original ordinance calls for a data review after one year. Is it reasonable to think that the call for a review in nine months may be driven by something other than logic and perhaps simply political? Does data exist to make a logical decision or is council responding to political pressures?

*These are the views of former Concord council member and Mayor, Edi Birsan. Next month with "Answers Not Challenged."*

**For the Love of Pets**  
by Jill Hedgecock, [Jillhedgecock.com](http://Jillhedgecock.com)

**HELP!**

## My Dog Has Cabin Fever

Winter months can be a trying time for active pets. If owners do not provide an outlet for all that exuberance, the consequences could be unwanted destructive behavior. In big dogs, this could be costly if the result of your beloved canine's boredom is a de-stuffed dog bed, or worse, a couch. Here are a few ideas to ward off your dog's cabin fever.



Treat-Dispensing Toys. For situations where you must leave your unexercised or high-energy dog for an extended period, treat-dispensing toys are a great option. There are many shapes and choices in this category, but the common feature is that dogs receive food rewards during play. Some toys include hide-and-slide features, others such as plush puzzles require the dog to use their noses to find treats. Toys that are highly durable can have the dual function of also serving as a chew toy once the treats are gone. A dishwasher safe feature can be a time-saver, too. These problem-solving toys have an added bonus of enhancing their intelligence and brain development.

Flirt Poles. A flirt pole is a lure, such as a tennis ball, on a rope attached to a stick or pole. Moving the lure stimulates your dog's prey drive, encouraging her to chase it. This toy

can be used in a small space, making it a perfect inside activity on rainy days.

Train a new trick. Pets are rarely bored if they have their human's undivided attention. Training a new trick is a great way to spend quality time with your pet. One fun activity is to teach your dog to turn in a circle. Show them a treat then move your hand in a slow circle around their head and give a verbal command such as "spin". Once they turn a full circle, give them the treat. Repeat this exercise until the dog performs the trick with only verbal encouragement.

Hide and Seek. Distract your dog with a chew toy then sneak into another room. Hide behind a bedroom door or under a blanket. Most dogs will soon notice your absence and come searching for you. Their joy at finding you will be a cause for celebration.

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.

## City's Dog Parks Closing for Annual Maintenance

Concord City dog parks are being renovated. Newhall Dog Park will be closed for renovations until March 17 and Baldwin Dog Park will be closed from March 17 to April 21. Renovations will include aeration, re-seeding, fertilizing, adding organic mulch, and allowing time for the natural turf grass to grow and fill in the worn areas. Gopher abatement will also be performed.

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

# Around Martinez



## Recreation Improvements In Your Neighborhood

by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez

The pickleball community in Martinez has struggled for years with limited space and no dedicated courts and often found their club going to neighboring cities to play. While some tennis courts were restriped for pickleball use as a temporary accommodation, the popularity of pickleball continued to grow.

After years of lobbying, Martinez pickleballers finally were able to witness the City Council approving a budget allocation for the construction of dedicated courts at Hidden Valley Park.

On Friday, February 28, 2025, the City of Martinez held a ribbon cutting to celebrate the new sports courts. This re-imagined area now boasts multiple pickleball courts, a new tennis court, and a resurfaced basketball half-court. In addition, the project includes paved walkways, benches, and new landscaping. When I stopped by on a Wednesday afternoon, the courts were packed with players, and paddles were queued up on the chain link fence to indicate folks were in line to play next. These pickleball court upgrades are just the latest addition to our recreational spaces in the neighborhoods and parks along Center Ave.

You may have noticed a major improvement to the walking path along Vine Hill Way and Center Ave. That path had been in disrepair and the City repaved it recently, a huge improvement to both aesthetics and safety. This path connects the California Riding and



A busy Wednesday evening at the Hidden Valley Pickleball Courts! (Photo Credit: Brianne Zorn)

### Hiking Trail to Pine Meadow Park.

A major milestone for Martinez parks was breaking ground on Pine Meadow Park last fall. When Phase 1 of the park is completed later this spring, it will include a small parking lot, a bathroom, an all-amenities playground, meadows, walking paths, and an amazing view of the Carquinez Strait!

Parks, open space, and unique recreational amenities are my passion. The Hidden Valley sports courts are an excellent example of a unique, efficient use of space. They are located in an easement below electrical transmission towers. These towers can be between 100 and 200 feet tall but limit development below them, so solutions such as sports courts or connectivity of walking trails are an excellent use of this type of space.

As we begin our City-wide Parks Plan this year, I hope that our city will look for opportunities for unique recreational amenities, such as small skate spots that let skateboarders do tricks not just at the skate park, spray and splash pads, or bicycle pump tracks and flow trails.



## Mortgage Rate Outlook for Contra Costa County: The Impact of Tariffs and Inflation

by Bonita Vega, Marketing/Bus. Development Manager, Shell Western States FCU [swsfcu.org](http://swsfcu.org)

Prospective buyers in Contra Costa County are closely monitoring economic changes, particularly regarding tariffs and inflation, and how these factors may soon influence mortgage rates.

While inflation has not surged significantly yet, many indicators suggest rising prices in the coming months. Supply chain challenges and increasing material costs could exert upward pressure on inflation. This may lead lenders to adjust mortgage rates to protect their profitability, making proactive financial planning crucial for consumers in this evolving landscape.

The imposition of tariffs on imported goods poses a growing concern for local builders. Increased costs for construction materials, such as appliances, lumber, and steel, could elevate home prices, especially for new developments. These costs are likely to be passed on to consumers, affecting overall housing affordability in the area. Additionally, this situation may stall construction, further straining inventory.

Inflation, exacerbated by tariffs, contributes to rising costs of daily goods. When inflation rises, the market adjusts, typically leading to higher business expenses. To combat this inflation, the Federal Reserve might raise interest rates, resulting in higher

mortgage rates. Although current rates are stable, expectations of future increases could impact purchasing power and influence how buyers search for homes.

### Consumers Should Be Proactive

Homeowners benefiting from historically low mortgage rates may delay selling their properties, reducing inventory and increasing competition in the market, which keeps home prices elevated. Conversely, buyers who act quickly may still secure favorable terms before any anticipated rate hikes.

While inflation has not yet become a significant issue, its potential emergence alongside tariffs suggests that consumers in Contra Costa County should prepare for a shifting mortgage landscape. It may be an opportune time to buy and stay ahead of uncertainties. Ongoing economic changes make the future of mortgage rates unpredictable.

However, by staying informed and proactive, buyers and homeowners can successfully navigate the evolving housing market and make decisions that align with their financial goals. Relying on professionals in the financial industry is more important than ever to guide you through these changes with confidence.

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March Community Events

Saturday, March 1, 2025  
10 AM - Martinez Youth Baseball/Softball Parade

Thursday, March 13, 2025  
6:30 PM - Contra Costa County Town Hall on PBF Energy Refinery Fire

Sunday, March 16, 2025  
11 AM - St. Baldrick's Shave-A-Thon

Saturday, March 22, 2025  
9 AM - Compost Giveaway

Saturday, March 29, 2025  
10 AM to 4 PM - SWAN Day, Support Women Artists Now! Art Event

For a full event details, visit [www.cityofmartinez.org](http://www.cityofmartinez.org) or our social media!



by Craig Lazerretti,  
Martinez News and Views

## Free Compost Giveaway on March 22

Republic Services is hosting a free compost giveaway for Martinez residents at the Martinez Yacht Club parking lot, 111 Tarantino Drive, on Saturday, March 22, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. To participate, residents must reserve an appointment for the event in advance. Bring a government-issued ID (such as a driver's license) with a Martinez address to the event. For more information, contact April Canavan at [acanavan@republicservices.com](mailto:acanavan@republicservices.com) or 1-925-316-9455, or visit [RepublicServices.com/MartinezCA](http://RepublicServices.com/MartinezCA)

## Take Survey On Future Of Martinez Amtrak Station

Residents are invited to complete a survey from the Contra Costa Transportation Authority where they can offer feedback on planned improvements to transform the Martinez Amtrak Station into a share mobility hub encompassing multiple transportation options, including biking, walking, transit, carpooling, ride-hailing, and on-demand shuttle service. This effort is part of CCTA's

larger Innovate 680 Program to improve travel along I-680 in Contra Costa County. Go to <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/8175885/c54285fc2e11> to take the survey.

## City to Wind Down Outdoor Dining and Retail Program

At the Feb.19 Council meeting, the City Council directed staff to wind down the Outdoor Dining and Retail Program that was born out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and transition participating businesses to the city's Special Events Program for assigning street closures.

Assistant City Manager Lauren Sugayan explained to the council that participation in the outdoor program that has closed streets on weekends had dwindled, with nearly half of businesses surveying saying it was having a neutral impact on their operations.

The council concurred, also noting safety concerns from the regular street closures. As part of transitioning street closures for commercial activities to the city's special events program, the city plans to revise the policy to determine criteria for granting street closure requests, which could include such factors as whether the events will foster community pride and culture and create economic vitality.

For the full article please go to Martinez News and Views

## Special Election Challenging School Board Appointment Expected to Exacerbate MUSD Budget Woes

by Craig Lazerretti,, Martinez  
News and Views

The Martinez Unified School District Board of Trustees approved roughly \$2.1 million in budget cuts earlier this month to address its ongoing budget crisis that shows no signs of abating. Now, it may have to come up with additional money to fund a special election for the Area 3 board seat that it filled in January through a provisional appointment.

Helen Nolan, assistant registrar at the Contra Costa County Elections Office, confirmed Monday afternoon that a sufficient number of signatures have been verified to call a special election for the Area 3 seat, which the district will be required to pay for out of its budget. Nolan put the estimated cost of the election at between \$50,000 and \$63,000.

"The special election has not yet been called, but we will be working with Lynn Mackey's office to ensure that the special election is called no further out than 125 days and no sooner than 88 days from the next scheduled election date of Aug. 26," Nolan wrote.

Once the special election is called, it will terminate the appointment of the lone ethnic minority member of the Board of Trustees.

Special elections to fill mid-term vacancies in board seats are highly unusual. Typically, boards fill the vacancy through a provisional appointment — which MUSD did with the appointment of Brittany Ayala — and the appointment stands until the next regularly scheduled

election, which in this case would be 2026.

Unhappy with the board's choice of Ayala over retired teacher and former head of the MUSD teachers union (the Martinez Education Association) Brenda Leal, an unidentified group has collected signatures asking for a special election to determine who will hold the seat until the expiration of the term in 2026.

A district parent, UC Berkeley community college transfer specialist and a child of Mexican immigrants, Ayala replaced the lone ethnic minority on the board, Yazmin Llamas, who was elected to the Contra Costa County Board of Education in November.

The attempt to unseat Ayala drew a strong rebuke during public comment Monday night from Linda Olvera, an advocate for the local immigrant community and the former chair of the city's Anti-Racism & Discrimination and Pro-Inclusion & Equity (ARDPIE) Task Force.

But Trustee Horack Martin also said she respected the right of voters to call for a special election. "What is happening with the special election is a legal, democratic process that is the right of the citizens of Area 3."

If and when a special election is called, Ayala's provisional appointment will be terminated and the seat will become vacant again pending the results of the election.

## Congressman Addresses Refinery Fire at Martinez Council Meeting

by Craig Lazerretti,, Martinez  
News and Views

During a presentation to the Martinez City Council on Feb. 19, U.S. Rep. Mark DeSaulnier, D-Walnut Creek, addressed the recent fire at PBF Energy's Martinez refinery, suggesting that a comprehensive audit of the facility may be appropriate to ascertain the root of the safety problems that have plagued it since 2022.

The congressman also recounted the checkered safety history of another local refinery and the corporate connection between it and PBF.

DeSaulnier, who was a Contra Costa County supervisor at the time of the Tosco fatalities in 1999, recalled how safety concerns at that refinery helped lead to the Contra Costa County Industrial Safety Ordinance, which in turn authorized the county to conduct a "full-facility audit" that shut down the Avon refinery for nearly a year.

"It came back and said the root cause of all these incidents was the corporate culture, which I'll never forget," he said.

DeSaulnier told the council that one of the four criteria for a full-facility audit is an incident causing at least \$500,000 in damage.

While DeSaulnier said he did not know enough details about the Feb. 1 fire to advocate outright for a full-facility audit. "Personally, I think it would be a good idea. It's more than just a compliance check or a safety audit.

The Martinez refinery underwent both

an unannounced inspection from Contra Costa Health in response to a flurry of incidents in 2022-23, and a regularly scheduled triennial audit by the agency, last year.

DeSaulnier, whose district does not encompass the refinery itself but does include fence-line neighborhoods, acknowledged that the refinery is a major source of good-paying jobs and tax revenues for the community and county.

"We are transitioning right now, particularly in California, to renewables and alternative fuels," he said. "We still need them in the transition, but we expect them to play by the community standards here, and the community standards here are higher than in Louisiana and Texas and a lot of places overseas."

Mayor Brianne Zorn thanked DeSaulnier for the cooperation of his office, along with Garamendi's, during and after the Feb. 1 fire, contrasting the heightened level of communication between the city and its local representatives with what occurred after the November 2022 spent catalyst release from the same refinery that caused significant community angst. "We've made a lot of really good progress knowing who to call, when to call," she said. I think the city of Martinez was kind of left on their own the first time. This time around, it was very helpful to have."

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**YOUR NEIGHBOR'S SHOES**  
by Michael Barrington, [mbwriter.net](http://mbwriter.net)

## High Stakes Defense Lawyer , Concord's Connection to Most Notorious Cases

Most of us would be surprised to know Concord has a connection to some of the nation's most notorious criminal cases since the 60s. Oakland Hell's Angels, the Symbionese Liberation Army (Patti Hearst) kidnapping) and their safe house in Concord, and the Chowchilla School Bus Kidnappers were just a few of the cases Will Maas worked on as a young lawyer living in Concord.

Maas was recruited by the world-famous and notorious San Francisco lawyer Melvin Belli. In many ways they were kindred spirits and while Belli routinely fired staff, Maas not only survived, he became his managing lawyer, supervising a large staff preparing material for trial cases.

Their clients also included celebrities such as Erol Flynn, Chuck Berry, Mohammad Ali, The Rolling Stones, Lana Turner, Tony Curtis, Mae West, and many of the rich and famous. They defended Zsa Zsa Gabor when Elk Summers sued Gabor for calling her "a financially strapped Hollywood has been." Defrocked TV evangelists Jim and Tami Baker were so pleased with Belli's representation that they gave him a gold-plated bible.

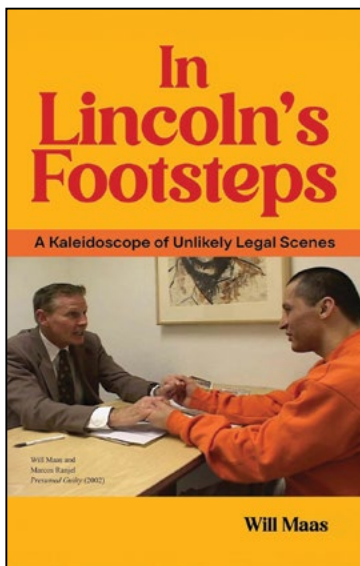
Maas worked as close to Belli as anybody was allowed on a daily basis with the man Life Magazine had crowned in 1954, "The King of Torts." In Maas's book "Richer than the King of Torts," Belli is shown as raw,



Photo taken in courtroom hall during resentencing hearing of Marcos Ranjel. May 31, 2022.

passionate, and funny. He was mean-spirited, ruthless and cruel. He and Mass parted company over Belli's refusal to pay his trusted manager some duly earned compensation for work over and above his normal responsibilities. A trivial and insignificant amount for Belli, for Maas it was a matter of principle. They later made up and remained friends, but Maas left and started his own legal practice.

Maas law firm took on some of the state's most notorious cases. He successfully defended The Mitchell brothers, Jim and Art, from Antioch, whom Time Magazine called, "The Potentates of Pornography," and resolved 150 criminal cases pending in San Francisco, Hayward, and Santa



The movie 'Presumed Guilty' can be viewed on Vimeo.com.

Ana, attempting to shut down their allegedly pornographic theaters.

He was a defense lawyer in the infamous murder trial, the chilling Golden Gate Park Barrels case. The bodies of a man and two women were found inside two cement-sealed steel drums that had been left in Golden Gate Park. Three more bodies are subsequently found. There were several perpetrators. Maas's client, Tina Livingston, served 21 months and 21 days instead of the death penalty.

In 2001, he defended Marcos Ranjel, the accused "Pink Tarantula Beauty Parlor" assassin who received a sentence of life in prison rather than facing death row. That same year, Maas was picked by his peers at the San Francisco Public Defenders Office as the "Best Male Defender."

In his book, "In Lincoln's Footsteps: A Kaleidoscope of Unlikely Legal Scenes", (published August 2024), Maas takes the reader behind the scenes of the courtroom and into the high-stakes world of California's criminal underworld from the 1960s to 2010. He exposes us to the darkest corners of society.

Maas grew up in a small Iowa farm

town and joined the army at age 18. He served three tours of duty in Vietnam, became a paratrooper with the 1st Cavalry Division and later served with the 82nd Airborne Division.

In part because of all the killings during the war, Maas was driven by a search for his own redemption to defend the accused. He believed that we are all flawed; all have the potential to murder. There was very little he wouldn't do in his later life to defend his clients.

After military service, Maas graduated with bachelor's and master's degrees in English and an Ed.S. in Education from the University of Iowa. He received his law degree from John F. Kennedy Law School.

At age 40, he stopped drinking, smoking and realized he needed to take care of his mind and body. He began bicycling marathons, running marathons and completed six triathlons. In 2003 he completed the Olympic distance, International triathlon in San Jose. He also began teaching legal analysis part-time at JFK University Law School in Orinda.

In retirement he has become a published author, and through his writings we are able to benefit from his extraordinary legal career, with incredible insights and self-disclosure.

He continues to write and hike the local trails. You will often see this tall, sprightly fair-haired man, for he is your neighbor. He lives in Concord.



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

## Empowering Future Healthcare Professionals CVCHS' Medical Careers Academy and CPR Training

From an early age, children are asked: what do you want to be when you grow up? Their answers often change over time, but the excitement of exploring future careers remains constant.

As educators, our mission at Clayton Valley Charter High School (CVCHS) is to nurture that excitement and help students discover careers that align with both their passions and market demands. One of the fastest-growing fields today is healthcare, which continues to experience increased hiring activity as the need for skilled medical professionals rises.

The Medical Careers Academy (MCA) at CVCHS is designed to prepare students for careers in healthcare and biomedical sciences. Through a combination of foundational coursework, mentorships, leadership training, and hands-on experience, students gain insight into medical investigation, problem-solving, clinical care, and public health emergencies.

MCA provides opportunities for all students, including English language learners and underrepresented minorities, to engage in a meaningful, career-focused curriculum.

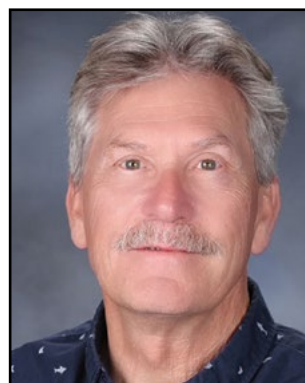
Students enrolled in MCA explore various career pathways in healthcare, medical research, technology, and sports medicine. By their third year, they can participate in job-shadowing experiences at local hospitals, medical offices, and biomedical science organizations.

Project-based learning further allows students to apply classroom knowledge to real-world medical scenarios.

A new and exciting addition to MCA is our CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) training program. This initiative provides students with the opportunity to become CPR-certified and, eventually, instructors themselves. By volunteering to teach others, students enhance their qualifications for jobs such as childcare providers, lifeguards, and hospital volunteers.

The certification process is rigorous. MCA students must complete three to four hours of online Red Cross training followed by three to four hours of in-person skills training, totaling approximately eight hours of instruction. To reinforce their learning, students participate in "teach-back" sessions, where they refine their instructional techniques while practicing on manikins. Upon completion, they receive Red Cross certification at the instructor level, allowing them to teach AED and CPR for infants and adults. Additionally, students complete an extra 1.5-hour online course to earn their First Aid instructor certification.

So far, we have trained 18 student instructors, who will serve as the foundation for our program. Our goal is to train approximately 200 students and staff members in Semester 2, including MCA participants and Link Crew leaders. Eventually, we plan to expand training opportunities to the community, with a



Richard Prizznick, Department Chairperson, Medical Careers Academy.



MCA students learning CPR life-saving skills at training workshop.

target of certifying 200-300 individuals per year at an affordable cost. These funds will help sustain and enhance our Medical Careers Academy.

The success of our CPR program would not be possible without our partnership with the East Bay Regional Park District. Community support plays a crucial role in MCA's ability to provide students with modern lab equipment, access to guest speakers, and networking opportunities with medical professionals. These resources help students prepare for careers in healthcare, pursue college or university degrees, or explore opportunities in military medical roles.

I want to recognize the exceptional

leadership of Richard Prizznick, MCA Department Chairperson. Now in his fourth year at CVCHS, Richard's background in medical and science education has been instrumental in expanding MCA enrollment, which now includes over 265 students — more than 10% of our school population.

Career-focused education is essential for student success. At CVCHS, our Academies provide structured pathways that allow students to explore future careers, develop practical skills, and gain real-world experience. By aligning education with workforce needs, we ensure that our graduates are well-prepared for employment and higher education. The Medical Careers Academy embodies this vision, equipping students with the knowledge and hands-on training they need to pursue fulfilling and impactful careers in healthcare and science.



## Protect Yourself from Real Estate Scams

Whether you are buying, selling, or renting, understanding common fraud tactics and knowing how to avoid them can save you from losing your hard-earned money. Here's how to stay safe and protect your real estate transactions.

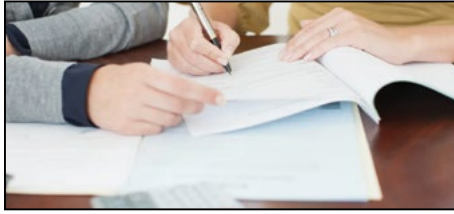
If a property deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Scammers often prey on buyers by offering properties at prices far below market value, creating a sense of urgency to close the deal quickly. Do your due diligence and compare prices with similar listings in the area.

Always work with licensed real estate agents, brokers, and attorneys. Check that they are properly credentialed through relevant regulatory bodies. A qualified professional will have the expertise to help you navigate the buying or selling process, spot red flags, and ensure your transactions are legitimate.

Before finalizing any transaction, confirm the ownership of the property. You can request a title search through a licensed title company or attorney to ensure there are no liens, unpaid mortgages, or ownership issues. Always verify that the seller is the rightful owner of the property they are offering.

Never make payments in cash or wire transfers without confirmation of legitimacy. Scammers often push for wire transfers, citing urgent needs or foreign transactions. Use secure, traceable methods like checks, credit cards, or escrow accounts to transfer funds. Never send money without first ensuring you are dealing with a legitimate party.

If you are buying or renting a property, make sure to research its history and condition. Be suspicious of properties that seem to have an unusually low asking price or appear in perfect condition without any wear and tear. Conduct a professional inspection to uncover any hidden issues.



Real estate scams often come in the form of fake listings or phishing emails designed to steal your personal information. Verify listings on trusted platforms and avoid clicking on links or downloading attachments from unknown sources. Be cautious when receiving unsolicited offers via email or text.

Understand any contracts before signing. Scammers may try to manipulate contracts to their advantage, adding hidden clauses or charging extra fees. Always read through the fine print, and do not hesitate to consult with a legal expert if something feels off.

If you encounter a scam or suspicious activity, report it to help prevent the scam from affecting more people. Contact your local real estate commission or consumer protection agency.

Staying vigilant and informed. By working with licensed professionals, verifying the legitimacy of offers, and remaining cautious with payments and contracts, you can reduce the risk of falling victim to fraud. Always trust your instincts.

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**Sprawling & Updated Single Story Rancher in Easley Estates** features Owned Solar, Pool & Spa. 4 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, approx 2096sf on an approx. .3 acre lot with inside laundry & an attached 2 car garage. Great location close to downtown.



**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.



**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.



**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.



**Jennifer Stojanovich**  
Broker DRE #01446062  
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6160 Center St., Suite E, Clayton  
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**Clayton Market Update**

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
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
5019 Raven Way	\$960,000	1493	3/2	1/31/2025
1456 Indianhead Cir	\$789,000	1709	3/3	2/4/2025
145 Regency Dr	\$1,115,000	1648	3/2	2/4/2025
26 El Molino Dr	\$1,155,000	1781	3/2.5	2/21/2025

**Concord Market Update**

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
975 San Miguel Rd	\$920,000	1754	3/2	1/30/2025
3996 Elwood Ct	\$750,000	1359	3/2	2/3/2025
2226 Chalomar Rd	\$900,000	1612	3/1.5	2/7/2025
310 Emmet Pl	\$1,910,000	3056	4/3.5	2/11/2025
1289 Kansas Cir	\$852,000	1232	3/2	2/14/2025
1747 Sapling Ct #A	\$559,000	1296	3/2.5	2/19/2025
951 Chandler Ct	\$1,015,000	1833	4/2	2/20/2025

Based on information from CCRAR/Paragon MLS as of 2/24/25. 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.



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# CSI: Springtime Pests

March can be an ideal time to reconnect with your garden after a cold and rainy winter. Warming days and mild nighttime temperatures with occasional rainy spells are also ideal for pests to reconnect with your plants. Let's play CSI detective to solve common spring plant crimes and put villains away for life.

## Who is guilty of chewing my rosebuds?

Can you spot tiny green bugs all over your new rosebuds and stems? What about white, black or rusty leaf spots?

**Prime Suspects:** Green aphids love warm and moist spring days. A single mother aphid can deposit hundreds of eggs per bush. Also, rosebud worms chew through stems beneath the bud and destroy it.

Leaf fungi explode in damp weather leaving clues of white powdery mildew, black spot, and rust.

**Apprehending and Preventing the Criminals:** Pick aphids and bud worms off bushes. Or, a sharp jet of water will knock them to the ground where they die. With severe infestations, use organic insecticidal soap. Avoid spraying beneficial aphid-eaters: ladybird and soldier beetles, assassin bugs, and "aphid lions" (ladybug larvae).

Pick off and toss fungus-struck leaves. Hot, dry weather sends aphids and worms elsewhere and leaf fungi go dormant. Purchase rose varieties that resist disease.

## What's chewing runways through my lawn grass and attacking the bases of my shrubs?

**Prime Suspects:** Voles — often confused as small gophers. Voles are vegetation-eating meadow mice. They live in underground tunnels and feed between exit/entrance holes. Voles are active 24-hours, and also chew bark at the bases of bushes, young trees, and their roots.

**Apprehending and Preventing the Criminals:** Trap them. Place a 2–3-inch length of 4-inch PVC pipe or an overturned section of unused rain gutter next to an exit hole. Set a mouse trap inside the other end of the tube. Voles will blunder into the trap. Check your traps daily and wear gloves when disposing them.

## Why are my pear and apple leaves turning black and my peach leaves turning red and crinkled?

– Green is the healthy color of fresh, new fruit tree leaves, not red or brown-black.



Voles make tracks of browsed grass in lawns - Courtesy Shutterstock



Ladybugs eat Aphids Voraciously - Courtesy UCANR

**Prime Suspects:** Leaf curl on peaches is fungus-caused, and fire blight on pears and apples is caused by a bacterium. Both are endemic throughout the county. They spread in cool, damp weather but can kill leaves and branches all summer.

**Apprehending and Preventing the Criminal:** One application of copper spray during dormant season will slow both leaf curl and fire blight. But you will need to cut off and dispose of the infected branches in the green waste bin. Cut several inches above the first visibly infected area. Hot, dry weather will slow their spread.

**Seasonal Notes:** Spray pop up weeds with eco-friendly weed killer made from 1/2 gallon of 30% strength vinegar mixed with 1/2 gallon of water and 4 ounces of Dawn dish soap (no salt). Apply organic compost or specialty fertilizer to citrus tree basins and summer-blooming plants.

Use the UC ANR Integrated Pest Management website for pest control techniques at [ipm.ucanr.edu](http://ipm.ucanr.edu). Your comments and questions are welcome at:

[NakedGardener@diablogazette.com](mailto:NakedGardener@diablogazette.com).



Peach leaf curl fungus crinkles and turns leaves red - Courtesy Shutterstock



Fire blight can eventually kill your fruit tree - Courtesy Shutterstock



THE GARDENS

at Heather Farm

# Spring Plant Sales

March 22

April 26

May 10

May 24



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[gardenshf.org](http://gardenshf.org)



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## 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](http://www.mobilitymatterscc.com)

**Todd Wheat**

Plumber/Owner

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## County Department of Weights and Measures Help Verify You Get What You Pay For

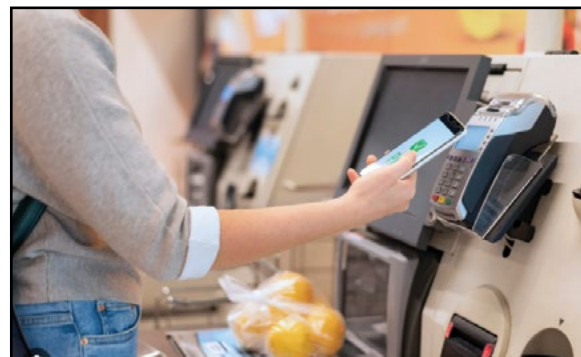
Every time you visit the grocery store, you have likely noticed that the prices of everyday items like eggs, produce, and poultry keep climbing. As inflation affects our wallets, getting the most value for our hard-earned dollars is more important than ever. If you are anything like me, when you buy apples and the checker weighs them, you probably don't think twice about whether the scale is accurate. But thankfully, there is a county agency that has our back — the Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures.

The Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures is dedicated to protecting the economic well-being of the community by ensuring the accuracy of weighing and measuring instruments, product standards, and business practices used in commerce. They aim to foster equity in the marketplace and create a level playing

field for businesses. To achieve this, the Department runs several key programs.

The Device Program ensures that commercial weighing and measuring devices are properly calibrated. This includes not just grocery store scales but also gasoline pumps, wire meters, and more. When a device is accurate, it ensures there is no overcharging to the consumer and a seal is placed in a visible location. All devices, along with their locations, are registered with the department, making it easy to track their performance and maintenance.

If a device fails inspection, it is taken out of service until repaired. All agents who perform repairs are licensed and registered with the Department's Registered Service Agency (RSA) which ensures repairs are done properly. The RSA helps maintain the accuracy and reliability of these devices before they can be returned to service.



net content listed on a product is correct. This program helps avoid issues like overcharging or undercharging, which benefits both buyers and sellers by ensuring a fair transaction every time.

These are just a few of the many ways the Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures impacts our daily lives. Beyond pricing accuracy, the department

also protects us from invasive insects, regulates petroleum products, ensures proper labeling at farmers' markets, and so much more.

To learn more about this small but essential department and how it works to keep things fair, visit their website: <https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/1542/Agriculture-Weights-Measures>.

Another crucial program is the Quantity Control Program, which ensures that consumers pay for exactly what they are getting. This program works to maintain price accuracy, protecting both consumers and businesses. For example, customers can be confident they're not paying extra for ice cubes when purchasing seafood, and they can trust that the



## Celebrating the Toyota Pavilion at Concord's 50th Birthday

The Toyota Pavilion at Concord, known for hosting top musical talent, high school graduations, and memorable community events turns 50 this year and the City of Concord, Live Nation, and other community partners are ready to celebrate.

### One-day sale on April 12

Mark your calendar for a one-day, in-person kickoff celebration event from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Pavilion Box Office, 2000 Kirker Pass Road. The box office will be selling \$50 tickets that will cover a select number of shows throughout the season. Look for food trucks and entertainment and experience the way music lovers used to buy concert tickets — in person.

## Clayton Valley Athletic Hall of Fame: 2025 Class of Inductees

The Clayton Valley Athletic Hall of Fame has announced its newest class of inductees to the Athletic Hall of Fame. The 2025 inductees will represent the eighth class of inductees since their initial class in 2008. This newest class of athletes and community members will be inducted at a ceremony on Friday, May 2, 2025, at the Centre Concord, 5298 Clayton Rd. in Concord (behind the Clayton Bowl). The event will start at 5:00 p.m. with a social mixer followed by dinner at 6:00 p.m. and the induction ceremony will commence at 7:00 p.m. Family, friends and CVHS sports fans are invited to attend. Tickets will be available after Monday, March 9, 2025, through the Clayton Valley Charter High School website or via US mail. (\$60. Adults - \$30. for kids 12 and under.) The induction ceremony will include a short introduction and acceptance speeches and a written program to include biographies on all inductees. This year's inductees are: Mitch Buich ('77) Football, Basketball, Tennis, Baseball Rocco Cardinale ('77) Wrestling

Laura Langraff-Wilson ('78) Gymnastics, Diving  
Brett McNamar ('81) Wrestling  
Steve Warren ('90) Track & Field  
Brian Foreman ('1998) Football, Basketball, Track  
Mike Gausman ('99) Swimming  
Adam Elliot ('02) Football, Baseball  
Lindsay Vanderstraeten ('06) Cross Country, Soccer, Track  
Kelsey Chambers, ('08) Basketball, Softball  
Lindsey Chambers ('08) Basketball, Softball  
Coaches, Teams, and Community inductees:  
Bill Nelson, Coach, Athletic Director  
Mikey Hamilton, Team Manager  
1990 Girls Soccer Team  
1998 Football Team  
2002 Baseball Team  
Reminder: The CVHS Hall of Fame will be holding its third bocce ball tournament on Saturday, April 12, at the Ipsen Family Bocce Park downtown Clayton. This is a competitive four-person team event. Gather your players and mark your calendar for this fundraiser.



Cast of Noises Off: L-R Patrick Atkinson, Maya Rath, Chip Renner, Teresa Grosserode, Ron Craven, Megan Larsen, James Bradley Jr., Deborah Huaco, Kevin Coren. photo credit Cara Bent

Clayton Theatre Company

# NOISES OFF

march 14-23

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Directed by La Tonya Watts  
Assistant Director Roxanne Pardi

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or by calling 925-334-0880 or at the Box Office 1-hour before curtain