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JANUARY 2018

## Acalanes: Soccer for the Soul

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**legalbriefs**  
by Douglas A. Prutton, Attorney  
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## New Employment Laws in California for 2018

Violations of labor and employment laws can be costly to employers. Not only does an employer often have to retain an attorney to defend such claims, but damages and penalties can escalate to huge amounts, and, if the employee prevails, the employer often has to pay the employee's attorney as well. For these reasons, and others, wise employers keep up with the changes in employment law.

2018 ushers in several important changes to employment law in California. The hiring process has been particularly impacted by these laws. Starting in 2018, employers must be very careful when it comes to inquiring into and considering an applicant's criminal history. The new law forbids an employer of more than five employees from including on any employment application a question that seeks disclosure of an applicant's criminal history (the "ban the box" requirement), and forbids such an employer from even inquiring into or considering criminal history until after a conditional offer letter has been issued. Although such an employer can conduct a background criminal check after the offer letter has been issued, the employer cannot consider information related to arrests that did not result in conviction, diversion program participation, or convictions that were sealed, dismissed, expunged or eradicated. If the employer intends to deny an applicant a position based on criminal history, the employer must conduct an "individualized assessment" to determine if the history has a "direct and adverse relationship" with the job duties, and the employer must notify the applicant in writing and provide an opportunity to the employee to dispute the conviction history. This "fair chance" process is rather detailed.

All employers must also be careful about inquiring about an applicant's salary history: this information cannot be sought from an applicant. Similarly, such information cannot be used in determining whether to hire an applicant and what salary to offer (though if the applicant "voluntarily" discloses salary history information the employer may rely on that information to set the applicant's salary). The California Fair Pay Act, however, provides that salary history alone cannot justify a gender or race disparity in

compensation.

In the inflammatory area of immigration, California has stepped up and passed laws barring employers from allowing immigration enforcement agents from entering nonpublic areas of a workplace without a judicial warrant, or as otherwise required by federal law. Employers are also forbidden from allowing immigration enforcement agents to access, review, or obtain employment records without a subpoena or judicial warrant. If an employer receives a Notice of Inspection from an immigration agency to inspect I-9 forms or other employment records, the employer must post a workplace notice and notify a union representative. After the agency issues the results of an I-9 inspection, the employer must provide each affected employee with the results. Finally, employers are forbidden from "reverifying" employment eligibility of a current employee in a manner not required by federal law. These immigration-related laws provide for substantial penalties ranging from \$2,000.00 to \$10,000.00.

2018 also brings new parental leave laws to California. For employers of 20 or more employees, the new law permits up to 12 weeks of job-protected (though unpaid) parental leave to bond with a new child. Eligible employees must have worked for 12 months (and put in at least 1250 hours during that time). Employees using this leave can use accrued vacation, paid sick leave or other accrued paid time off, and may apply for California Paid Family Leave benefits. The employers are required to pay for group health coverage during the leave.

Another new law in California allows employees of subcontractors to go after the general contractor for unpaid wages. This law only impacts contracts entered into after January 1, 2018.

This article only sketches the new employment laws, so if you are an employer or an employee that may be impacted by these laws please seek additional advice to understand exactly the requirements of these laws. Have a Happy Holiday and a Happy New Year and I look forward to keeping you updated regarding more employment and personal injury issues in 2018.

## Veranda, Finally Open for Business



The highly anticipated, new shopping complex, The Veranda, opened in Concord just in time for the Holiday shopping.

365 Whole Foods, Cost Plus World Market, Toys Are Us, TJ Maxx

and the Veranda Luxe Cinema have all opened their doors. More stores are completing construction and will be opening soon.

Several area dignitaries honored The Veranda at the Grand Opening including County Supervisor Karen Mitchell, Concord Mayor Edi Birsan,



Both Pleasant Hill and Concord's Greater Area Chambers of Com-

merce each participated with the traditional ribbon cutting followed by fireworks.

Concord is bucking a national trend.

U.S. retailers are closing more stores going into 2018. According to a study by Fong Global Retail and Tech, U.S. retailers announced plans to close almost 7,000 stores in 2017 compared to only 3,400 store openings. So, the city has reason to be celebrating the new additional retail space.

"If we add more services to our community we have more happy people. So, all in all, it's a win, win, win. This is the first major development since 1973," says Concord Mayor Edi Birsan.

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# Audubon's Annual Bird Count

## Fewer Bird Species Found in Contra Costa

By Jill Hedgecock | [www.jillhedgecock.com](http://www.jillhedgecock.com), Program Coordinator, Mount Diablo branch of the California Writers Club

Birds are considered an important economic resource for the hunting, birding, and tourism industries here or as a cultural resource such as a national or religious symbol. But for some, these feathered creatures are a gateway to connect to nature. For the avid birder, December brought a much-anticipated event.

Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) began on Christmas Day 1900 by ornithologist Frank M.

Chapman to protest a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt" that honored whoever brought in the largest cache of dead feathered and furred animals. That original CBC spanned 25 locations from Toronto, Canada to Pacific Grove, California. This event has expanded to just over 2000 counts. December marked Audubon's 118th CBC.

The CBC is the epitome of citizen science. Scientists use the data to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. Each CBC



Green Heron

a danger of double-counting, but Farrington had a solution. When counting birds in the lake habitat, each person tallies a single waterbird species.

"Find a point along the lake where you can view the whole lake," Farrington instructed, "then count. As you move around the lake, continue to count at each

viewpoint. The highest number will be the final tally for that species."

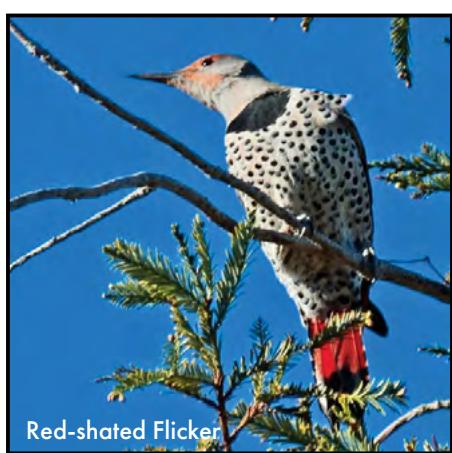
Farrington also asked the group to look out for the rare tropical kingbird that first appeared at Heather Farms Park in 2013. It had only had previously been sighted once on a CBC count day. About a half-hour into the count, Kai sighted this medium-sized songbird with a bright-yellow belly. Farrington also spotted the rarity a short time later.

Luck was with this group when they identified a snow goose. This species had not been seen at Heather Farms since the early 1990s. In the last 25 years, this is only the 7th time this bird has been spotted across the 15 areas of the Central County MDAS count.

The group left Heather Farms to survey Howe Homestead Park. At the end of the day, a total of 52 species had been tallied.

That evening, leaders and participants from the 15 areas of the MDAS CBC gathered for dinner to learn what others spotted. Here, a list of 213 possible species observed over the last 25 years were announced while area leaders responded whether or not the birds were seen this year, starting with birds that have been seen 25 out of 25 counts and whittling down to birds seen only once. A collective groan erupted when regularly observed birds, such as the common merganser and western screech owl, were missed. At the end of the list, Jerry Britten, a compiler, asked if anyone had seen a bird not announced. To the delight of the crowd, Denise Wight, reported that she spotted a Caspian tern at the former Concord Naval Weapons Station.

While wind may have played a role in overall number of birds seen in 2017



Red-shafted Flicker

is performed by a group of birders, each tackling one of the multiple segments in a 15-mile diameter circle. Dedicated volunteers often start at the crack of dawn and count every bird until dusk. Owling can begin before sunrise and continue after dark. While the data have shown population booms in some species such as the not-so-native wild turkey in California, the American bittern and others have declined. Like the canary in the coal mine, birds are an early warning system for changes in the health of ecosystems.

On December 16, 70 dedicated bird-watchers participated in the Central County CBC organized by Elizabeth Leite of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society (MDAS)—no small feat given that coverage is needed for fifteen different areas.

At Heather Farms Park, a group of dedicated folks, including several young birders, assembled at 8:00 a.m. Count leader Tracy Farrington started the Young Birders Club in June 2013 and several youth joined in the count. Fourteen-year-old Sam Rosenbaum became interested in birding about a year ago when he encountered Farrington's young birders at an event at John Muir National Historic Site. Kai Mills, a four-time MDAs CBC participant and freshman at Cal Poly, became interested in birding in 8th grade while visiting his grandfather in Seattle.

The young birders club has even resulted in recruiting adults. Erica Kawata, who regularly transported Kai to young birder's events, became intrigued and soon viewed birds alongside Kai.

Because birds move around, there's



Snow Goose



Tracy and volunteers Erica Kawaata and Kai Mills



White-crowned Sparrow

(146 species) down from 2016 when 151 species were sighted. Decreased habitat was cited as the lack of sightings of several species. This year, as in years past, strategies to protect birds and their habitat will be based on the data compiled.

To learn more about MDAS visit [https://www.diabloaudubon.org](http://www.diabloaudubon.org). To inquire about the Young Birds Club, contact Tracy Farrington at [tracy\\_farrington@yahoo.com](mailto:tracy_farrington@yahoo.com) or call (925) 788-6223.



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# Breaking Good

## Tomizaki's Champions Kung Fu Institute: A Model of Good Citizenship

by David King

Whenever possible, Diablo Gazette will put out a good faith effort to help recognize local businesses that are doing their very best to be a good citizen to our community; case in point, Tomizaki's Champions Kung Fu Institute of Concord.

Tomizaki's Champions Kung Fu Institute celebrated their 10-year Anniversary this past November. The evening included an amazing Lion Dance performance, songs by the Ladies First choir from Concord High School, and students from Tomizaki's Champions wrote and performed a jazz ensemble dedicated to Master Tomizaki. It also involved raising funds to support the American Red Cross with a silent auction and a dessert auction at their Anniversary Gala held at Boundary Oaks in Walnut Creek. In addition, 20% of all sweatshirt sales in October went to the Red Cross as well as donations collected from students and parents. They received donations from families and local businesses including All Star Nail, Mai Tai 2, Strictly to Go Pizza and Alpine Bakery. Altogether, they raised \$3400.00

In 2007, on Master Tomizaki's 40th birthday, he broke 40 boards and raised \$1200 for the Bay Area Crisis Nursery. In 2011, Master Tomizaki did a Break-A-Thon and broke 99 boards and one brick raising over \$3000 for the Red Cross - Japan Tsunami. In 2012, Master Tomizaki's Over-the-Edge event raised over \$2000 for the Special Olympics. And in 2015, the school did a Kick-A-Thon and raised \$4200 for the Red Cross - Nepal.

Tomizaki's Champions have donated over 1200 lbs. of food to the Food Bank over the years, and collected donations for STAND!, Bay Area Crisis Nursery, the Monument Crisis Center, and performed

a Lion Dance for Meals on Wheels.

"I didn't know, was how generous Master Tomizaki personally is," said Stephanie Tomizaki, who joined the business after marrying Master Tomizaki. "I was searching thru folders, binders, books, etc. looking for old photos, I came



upon years' of certificates of thanks for contributions to the Wall of Tolerance in Montgomery, Alabama, the USO, UNICEF, Environmental Defense Fund, Father Flanagan's Boys Home, Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland, Project HOPE, St. Joseph's Indian School, Natural Resources Defense Council, Amnesty International, United States Olympic Committee Team USA, Special Olympics, American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, and Doctors Without Borders.

If you get a chance, even if you or your family isn't enrolled into Kung Fu, maybe you can drop a simple note or comment to master Tomizaki and say thanks for breaking good.



No Matter Your Flavor, The Diablo Gazette is FOR YOU!



**Jennifer Stojanovich**  
Realtor, Better Homes Realty

## Get Ready to Buy in 2018

Is 2018 the year you'll finally realize your dream of buying a home? If you'd like to make that dream a reality, start planning now so you'll be ready in the New Year. Here's what you need to do to set yourself up for your 2018 home purchase.

Request your credit report. The first, and most important, thing you should do as you prepare to buy a home in the coming year is to check your credit. Your credit affects your ability to qualify for a loan and the kind of interest rate you'll get. The better your credit, the more favorable your loan conditions will be. Even if you think you have excellent credit, you need to request your report. Many credit reports contain errors, and you'll need time to address them and have them removed. And if your credit isn't great, you can start putting measures in place to repair it.

Ask for money. Consider how much cash you'll need for closing. Not only do you need money for the down payment, up to 20 percent of the purchase price, but you'll also need to save for moving expenses, repairs and other unexpected costs. If you received financial gifts over the holidays, use that toward your home purchase.

Determine how much you can spend. Before you begin looking at homes in earnest, you need to determine your price range. Use an Online calculator to plug in your details and find out how much house you can afford. And remember,

it's always fun to fantasize about your dream house, but be realistic about how much you can comfortably spend each month. Committing to expensive mortgage payments that you have to stretch to make each month is stressful. You'll enjoy your new home more if you aren't worried about staying current on your loan.

Start looking at neighborhoods. The fun part of looking for a new home is researching neighbors and getting a feel for where you want to live. If you live close to the area where you want to move, drive around some neighborhoods, and see them at different times of day. If you don't live nearby, take a virtual tour with Google Earth and scour the web for information. Start making a list of what you're looking for in a community, and see which ones fit the bill.

Get preapproval for a loan. If you're happy with your credit score and you're ready to begin your search, then it's time to get pre-approved for a loan. Take time to research lenders and find the best rates and terms. Getting pre-approved for a mortgage shows sellers that you are serious about buying a home. It is essential that you get a pre-approval letter once you've determined you're ready to start putting offers on homes that fit your needs.

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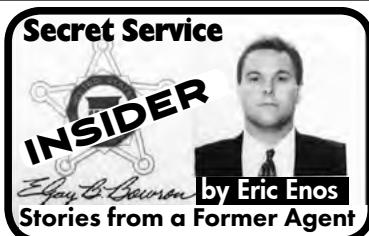
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*[Editors Note: Few of us have ever met a Secret Service Agent, or maybe you have and don't know it. "Inside the Secret Service" is about life as a Secret Service agent. These are true stories of real life experiences of Eric Enos, a Concord resident who spent years as a Secret Service agent.]*

All prospective agents know, long before they are ever hired, of the travel requirements of a Special Agent with the US Secret Service. It's discussed during the hiring process a minimum of three times; during the initial interview, during the panel interview, and during the home interview. Holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions are going to be missed countless times throughout an agent's career, as the "needs of the Service" take precedence. Travel could be anywhere from four or five days, to three weeks, or even a month on rare occasions. Luckily, I was only away from home for thirty straight days once during my career.

I had been assigned to a week long detail at the World Economic Forum in New York City at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Upon completion, I was then detailed to the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City for another three weeks. A month away from home seemed like an eternity. I especially missed my three-year-old son. I cherished the time with my son; wrestling, playing catch, feeding the ducks on our walks, etc., as he seemed to grow and change every day. I told my wife not to tell him which day I was flying home because I wanted to pick him up from preschool and surprise him. When I arrived, the teachers were aware of the situation and had him out back. All the other kids had already been picked up. I remember being teary-eyed as

# When Dad is a Secret Service Agent Family Time Sacrifices

I watched him through the backdoor window. He had grown so much over the past thirty days. He was playing by himself on the play structure, in his own little world as he waited for, what he thought would be, his mom to pick him up, as was the normal routine. As long as I live, I'll never forget the moment I opened the door, called his name, and saw the wide-eyed surprised look on his face and heard the screech of "Daddy!" And I can still see him (sixteen years later) as he ran from the play structure, his little feet, legs, and arms, pumping away, and jumped into my arms. Nor will I forget the huge hug he gave me and the unconditional love and warmth in that hug.

Time doesn't stand still, and we never get it back. And once kids come along, time escalates rapidly. Because ours was not the typical 9 to 5, Monday thru Friday, traditional kind of job. It always pitted work time against family time. Work almost always won. With that in mind, I (like many agents with families) always made every effort to share as much of the physical part of the job with my family as possible, getting them into as many events as I could. This wasn't always easy, and happened less often than I preferred, as our family grew from one to three kids and my wife was still working during the first several years of my career. I wanted my kids to get a behind the scenes look at the Secret Service, to see what their dad did, and to see our military and law enforcement in action. I wanted them to get a first-hand glimpse of some of what went in to keeping the President and other world leaders safe. As a result, my family would sometimes join me at the hotels I would be staying in while on protection assignments. It was the



Agent Enos and family at White House Rose Garden

inside the White House there is always an overwhelming sense, a feeling, a physical presence supported by sight and touch, of history as one literally walks in the footsteps of the current President and in those of each preceding President starting with John Adams. The sense of patriotism and American pride is indescribable. Anyone who is inside those walls and doesn't experience those feelings and emotions, is probably residing in the wrong country. Certainly, in the wrong profession. Quite

older, they would look back on those events with a true understanding and appreciation of just what they were able to witness during those times, its historical significance, and to hopefully develop the same admiration, respect, and pride, in their country and all it stands for, as their old man had. Hopefully, their memories of the hotel's room service wouldn't overshadow their memories of the Secret Service.

## County Office of Education to Manage EdTV Channel

The Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) will begin to coordinate local education programming for the Contra Costa County Education Channel, EdTV. CCCOE, with support from Contra Costa Television (CCTV), will be providing more access of quality, local pre-K through College educational programming to residents, students, educators and stakeholders in Contra Costa County.

"We are extremely excited to begin promoting education in Contra Costa County through the power of community access television," said Karen Sakata, Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools. "This partnership with the County will enable us to provide a voice and a forum to students, schools, school districts and higher education in our County so they can effectively tell their stories through video."

EdTV, an Educational Access channel, is a basic cable TV service on Comcast Channel 32 and AT&T U-verse Channel 99, and is available throughout most of Contra Costa County. Currently, EdTV is unavailable to cable subscribers in San Ramon as well as WAVE subscribers. EdTV is one of a handful of PEG (Public, Education and Government) Access Channels that operate in Contra Costa County. All of these channels are carried in Standard Definition. Contra Costa Television (CCTV) currently manages five PEG channels. Online streaming of EdTV

and availability of Online video on demand will also be explored.

"Contra Costa County is home to nearly 400 K-12 public and private schools, 18 school districts, as well as several institutions of higher education," said Terry Koehne, Chief Communications Officer for the Contra Costa County Office of Education. "Each of these local education agencies would have the ability to publish unique, locally produced content and bulletin board material to EdTV, thus providing direct access to a majority of Contra Costa County residents and businesses; that is our goal."

The role of the County Office of Education will be to work in collaboration with CCTV to direct the overall content and programming schedule for the channel, approve video and bulletin board content through the development of content submission guidelines, and promote EdTV using all communication tools available.

"It is a natural fit for the County Office of Education to take on this role," said Chris Verdugo, Interim Director of Communications and Media for Contra Costa County. "We look forward to more quality content that promotes and impacts our local education communities."



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## Concord: The Next Frontier

by Nik Wojcik

Concord, tucked away in the outskirts of the East Bay, close enough to urban centers to commute into work and far enough away to find some peace and quiet when needed – a place with a diverse community and emerging opportunities – a place drenched in history but on the cusp of innovation, and it's quickly shaping up to be the next frontier in the development of the Bay.

Located conveniently along a direct BART line to San Francisco, it is the largest city in Contra Costa County with approximately 125,000 residents, according to 2014 Department of Finance numbers. That's nearly twice the size of Berkeley.

What puts the city on the radar at the moment is the 5,600 acres at the Concord Naval Weapons Station where nuclear weapons once traveled in underground tunnels between ports and inland bunkers, as reported in a 2015 East Bay Times article. The undeveloped parcels are now free for the city to use and build upon, an opportunity befallen on a city struggling to provide feasible housing solutions.

Concord is already experiencing a demographic shift as people migrate from places like San Francisco and Oakland. As tech companies push up cost of living closer to the Bay, many long-time residents are priced out of their neighborhoods and forced to find new, reasonably priced digs. Concord has become a workable solution for many.

There is a rational expectation that the trend will only intensify as development plans move forward and provide new housing, work opportunities, schools and open spaces. We sat down with Concord's new mayor, Edi Birsan, to discuss how the city can move forward in the best interest of its residents and meet the increasing housing challenges. How will it respond to the Bay Area's greater needs and manage to avoid gentrification pitfalls that have plagued marginalized communities?

**DG:** Concord continues to attract tech companies hoping to attract higher wage jobs. What else is the city planning for the development of the Concord Naval Weapons Station?

**Mayor:** It's about 5,600 acres of the weapons station – that's total area. About 3,000 and some change is going to be a regional park – 2,200 to 2,600 is going to be developed. The current plans are for about 28,000 people, 13,000 dwelling units – apartments, homes, duplexes, multiplexes – and 6 million square feet of commercial space, some light industrial, retail and a tournament field of about 75 to 100 acres, so we can host statewide championships and stuff like that. Plus a school, about 100 acres for a college, if we can convince someone to build it.

**DG:** In light of how other cities have gentrified, Concord has already seen early signs of displacement and rapidly rising rents. How do you avoid pushing out current residents that won't be able to afford to live here much longer either?

**Mayor:** I tried over the last year and a half to get rent stabilization, and that's for the 8,886 dwelling units/apartment that were built before '95. Under the California State law, you can't have anything like rent control that applies to things built after 1995 – that's the law. What I proposed is what was considered by the apartment owners' association as their best practic-

es, which was only one increase a year of not more than 10 percent, and eviction with basically just cause, so you can't just say 'You're out of here.' I was the only one who voted for those. To be fair, I should direct you to ask them (City Councilmembers) why.

The Monument (Corridor) got clobbered with rent increases the past two years. It's since stabilized, but that's because it went up 20 percent, 40 percent, and a lot of people were forced out. The city was not able to react in time to stop that. The city was unwilling, even in the case of default for safety repairs, to stop the (landlords) from raising rent.

I think we've lost a major section of low-income, mostly Hispanic – and that's what I'm expecting to see in the census.

Here's the conflict. People want to have good paying jobs in their community. Well, what comes with good paying jobs? Traffic. And you want to reduce traffic because you want people to live here. What does that do for the demand of housing?

Now, people say they want affordable housing. I want affordable housing. We have the weapons station with a requirement of 25 percent of affordable housing. When you talk about affordable housing to average people, they think, 'yeah, that's a great idea, but that's Section 8 and we don't want Section 8.'

If you look around here (Todos Santos Plaza), there's a lot of Help Wanted signs. Well, who are they trying to get to help? People who are making \$12 and \$15 – retail. Now, where are those people going to live? They're going to live in a bedroom in their grandparents' house, they're going to live in the backyard, they're going to live far away and commute here. Nobody says 'we want low paying jobs' – nobody.

**DG:** What about all the construction happening beyond the NWS development? Is there any housing relief expected out of that?

**Mayor:** The market is demanding more housing here. Well, what's going up? We have within a mile of here, we have almost 2,000 units being built. They will go for between \$2,000 and \$3,000 a month in rent.

Something I'm interested in is studios. I put in a program for what used to be called mother-in-law units, casitas. The cost (charged by city for water connection and fees) to do this was outrageous. I got them to drop it down, but I haven't seen it really begin to kick in.

**DG:** Often, cities experiencing similar growth also see a rise in absentee landlords – something that doesn't always go over so well with other established homeowners. Do you have plans to mitigate those concerns?

We can get code enforcement, we can do the health department, we got housing, but there are certain limitations that we have. As we develop further, everything that's going in is fairly new. One of the things I kicked around and I'm expecting to complete this year is an increase in our funds for affordable housing – to keep people in their houses, so they can refurbish their houses.

We have low-income people hanging on by their bare minimums even though they're paying their mortgages from 20 years ago. They're living on next-to-nothing, and seniors are on Social Security.

Housing is a problem of balance. Communities are a problem of balance. The city is changing.



Your January 2018 Guide to the Bay Area

The Diablo Gazette's

## ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

**FUNDRAISERS**

**Pancake Breakfast** - Supporting Veterans of Foreign Wars - 2nd and 4th Sundays includes eggs, pancakes, sausage, beverage. 8 - 11 a.m. Willow Pass Road, Concord \$5 buys a terrific breakfast.. <http://www.vfwpost1525.org>

**Music and Market Series**

Funding for Concord's Music and Market concert series was lost with the elimination of the Concord Redevelopment Agency. Thanks to generous donations from local businesses, fund-raising events and money collected throughout the year, enough support was raised to continue the Thursday Music and Market series. Elected officials and volunteers are now working to raise support for the season. To Make a Donation Make checks payable to: City of Concord -- Mail to: City of Concord Music Donation, 1950 Parkside Drive, MS 1B Concord, CA 94519

**OUTDOORS**

**Concord**: Todos Santos Park OFF the Grid Mondays. offering cuisine from around the world from 5 to 9 p.m. Full lineup available at <http://offthegridsf.com>.

**Farmers' Markets**

**Concord** Tuesdays, 10am to 2pm, year-round, rain or shine. • Martinez Sundays, 10am to 2pm, year-round, Main St. and Estudillo. Walnut Creek Diablo Valley Farmers Market Saturday 9a.m. - 1 p.m. Shadelands Business Park, N. Wiggett Lane and Mitchell Dr. Also, from Contra Costa Certified

Farmers Market - North Locust St between Giamona and Lacassie St. Sundays 9 am - 1 pm, Year Round, (925) 431-8361 <http://www.cccfm.org>

**Holiday Ice Skating**

**DC Solar Downtown Holiday Ice Rink** Martinez. Open 7 days weather permitting. Corner of Ferry St. and Marina Vista Ave. Open through January 7. [www.downtownholidayice.com](http://www.downtownholidayice.com)

**Walnut Creek on Ice** Open through January 15. 1365 Civic Drive . Prices \$12-\$15.

**Camp Concord**

Registration Begins: February 6 with exclusive early registration for Friends of Camp Concord members starting on January 8, 2018. Affordable Family Vacations in Lake Tahoe. 2018 Family Camp Dates: Friday, June 22 - Saturday, July 14; Monday, July 30 - Friday, August 12 You choose the length of your stay. You choose your arrival and departure days.

**Club/Support Group News and Events**

**Galindo Home and Gardens Tours** - 1721 Amador Avenue, Concord. Visit the fully-restored 1856 Victorian home of Francisco Galindo, one of Concord's founding fathers, and his wife, Maria Dolores Manuela (Pacheco) Galindo. This includes the 1875 addition by Francisco Galindo's son, Juan "John" Galindo. No reservations needed. Fee \$5 for adults and children over 12. One of only a few Victorian

ranch houses in the country. By 1880, the structure was reconfigured in the Queen Anne style, with bay windows, sweeping steps, and a broad porch. Visitors can tour the 10 rooms and see 15 original pieces of Eastlake furniture. For more information go to [concordhistorical.org](http://concordhistorical.org).

**January 11**

**The Emergency Disaster Services**, Salvation Army Concord Corps in Conjunction with the Mt Diablo Amateur Radio Club has scheduled a beginning level class, details and on line registration can be found at: <http://www.mdarc.org> or Email: HamRadioClass@gmail.com

**January 13**

**13th Annual Crab and Tri-Tip Feed** Walnut Festival Association. Crab, Tri-Tip, Pasta, Salad and Garlic Bread. No Host Bar, silent auction, raffle prizes and silent sports memorabilia auction. 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM Pleasant Hill Senior Center 233 Gregory Lane Pleasant Hill \$55

**January 23****33rd Annual Mayor's Luncheon**

Please join us at the 33rd Annual Mayor's Lunch at the Hilton in Concord from 11:30 to 1:30. Mayor Edi Birsan will deliver the State of the City Address. Pre-paid reservations are required and will be \$55 per person. Please contact us today for more information on sponsorships and or reservations. Hilton Concord. 1970 Diamond Blvd. Concord

**Online Cat Foster Orientation**

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM Learn the joys of

fostering cats and kittens from experienced foster parents and ARF's Foster Supervisor. The class is one hour in length. 50 minutes is dedicated to course material, and 10 minutes is for sign up and discussion. Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation 2890 Mitchell Drive Walnut Creek

**January 28**

**Wedding Fair** 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM. Fashion Show, Live Music, Florists, Planners, Photographers, Videographers, DJ's, Lighting, Event Decor, Photo Booths, Jewelry, Gourmet Food, Desserts, Wine tasting, etc. Presenting \$10,000 Wedding Package for One Lucky Couple. Las Vegas Giveaways and Stage Prizes. Walnut Creek Marriott. 2355 North Main Street Walnut Creek Admission: \$15 Online, \$25 At the Door.

**February 8**

**Free Advance Health Care Directives for Seniors.** 9:15 AM - 11:15 AM. Contra Costa Senior Legal Services, City of Concord, and members of AIG's Legal Department host a Free legal clinic for Contra Costa County seniors. Meet with attorneys to prepare your Advance Health Care Directive tailored for free. An AHCD is the legal document used to (1) ensure that your health care wishes are known if you are unable to speak for yourself, and (2) allows you to appoint an agent to make health care decisions for you. (925) 671-3320 to sign up for your free appointment with an attorney. Concord Senior Center 2727 Parkside Circle. <http://ccsls.org>

**CALENDAR** continues on next page

## Diablo Ballet Celebrates the New Year with Harmonious Beauty

Features Val Caniparoli's "A Cinderella Story"

Diablo Ballet celebrates the New Year with "Harmonious Beauty," February 2-3 at the Del Valle Theatre in Walnut Creek. The program is composed of four unique ballets and one short film, including a World Premiere by Danielle Rowe.

"A Cinderella Story" is a romantic Ballroom Pas de Deux from Val Caniparoli's, set to the beautiful and timeless music of Broadway composer Richard Rodgers.

Commissioned for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and in 2004, "A Cinderella Story" is a retro retelling of everybody's favorite fairy tale complete with vintage couture-inspired costumes and an infused Broadway-meets-ballet-meets-ballroom choreography.

The program also features the World Premiere "And Here We Are" choreographed by Danielle Rowe. Set to the Piano Quartet in A minor by Gustav Mahler, this riveting ballet will feature six dancers representing one couple as they move through difficult stages in their relationship.

Diablo Ballet's Artistic Advisor, Sally Streets, presents "Encores" which was originally created for the company in 1996. The ballet is set to Cavatina by Joseph Joachim Raff, Alt Wien by

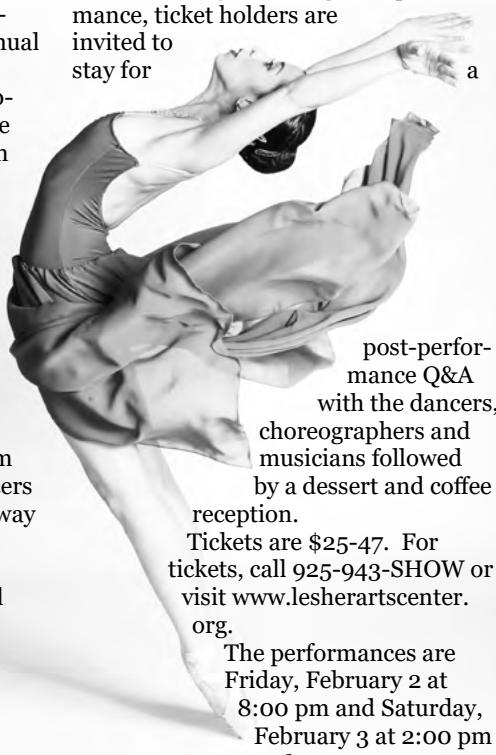
Leopold Godowsky (arranged by Jascha Heifetz) and Souvenir d'Amérique by Henri Vieuxtemps performed to a recording by Itzhak Perlman and Samuel Sanders.

The award-winning short film "Libera" by Walter Yamazaki just won the U.S. Hollywood International Golden Film Award for Excellence in Music. The film was premiered last year during the company's 23rd Anniversary Performance. With an original score composed by Justin Levitt, the film is described as "a short film examining the dancer in two worlds – the world of constraint and the world of infinite freedom – and how they must strive to find balance between the two..." Criticaldance.com wrote, "(Libera) introduced the dancers in a far more intimate and personal way – an exploration of identity, of life purpose, of Being and dance-ness."

The final ballet of the program will be Resident Choreographer, Robert Dekkers', exotic and mysterious "Milieu", set to a live performance of a commissioned score by Daniel Berkman. The last time the company performed the ballet, Huffington Post stated, "The ensemble displayed fearless athleti-

cism as well as drop dead chic."

Immediately following each performance, ticket holders are invited to stay for



post-performance Q&A with the dancers, choreographers and musicians followed by a dessert and coffee reception.

Tickets are \$25-47. For tickets, call 925-943-SHOW or visit [www.lesherartscenter.org](http://www.lesherartscenter.org).

The performances are Friday, February 2 at 8:00 pm and Saturday, February 3 at 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm

## Motoshi Kosako – Jazz HARPIST coming to the Jazz Room



Motoshi Kosako will be performing on January 8th at the Jazz Room at Village Theatre in Danville.

An electric guitarist in Tokyo jazz bands, Mr. Kosako moved to the United States in 1997 and started playing the harp. He is primarily self-taught. He was the principal harpist of Stockton Symphony Orchestra in California between 2005-2010 and the featuring soloist for 2009-2010 season.

He placed second in Lyon & Healy International Jazz & Pop Harp Competition and received the "Best of Sacramento" award from Sacramento Magazine stating, "Kosako plays with fluid, modern style that evokes Keith Jarrett and Chick Corea." Guest soloist will be Eve Marie Shahaian.

Also appearing at the Jazz Room, on January 6 at 8pm, Kenny Washington. Dubbed "the Superman of the Bay Area Jazz scene" by the San Francisco Chronicle, Washington is a jazz virtuoso who thrills audiences with soulful interpretations, a limitless range, and rapid-fire scatting.

For more information go to [www.villagetheatreshows.com](http://www.villagetheatreshows.com). Village Theatres, 233 Front Street in Danville.

## “LIVE TV!” LIKE YOU’VE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE!

Get ready to binge watch your “favorite” old sitcom, but live with Synergy Theater except that they’re making it up as they go along. Synergy Theater returns to the Lesher Center for the Arts January 18-21 with their original show “Spontaneous Sitcom”, an evening of three completely improvised episodes of a made-up television show.

“We make up a TV show and the



real TV shows.”

“We say that it’s a sitcom from 90’s” adds Synergy newcomer Julie Stein. “So, we’re inspired by shows like “Friends” and “Seinfeld.”

Kenn Adams has over 25 years of experience as a professional improviser and is the author of the book *How to Improvise a Full-Length Play: The Art of Spontaneous Theater*. He created the well-known short-form improv games “Sit, Stand and Kneel and Ding/Buzz” (aka “The Family Dinner”). Both of those games have become staples of the short-form improv stage and were featured regularly on the popular television shows “Whose Line is it Anyway?”

It promises to be a fun, enjoyable evening at the January 18-21

“Spontaneous Sitcom” Lesher Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek, 1601 Civic Drive. Show times and tickets available at [www.lesherartcenter.org](http://www.lesherartcenter.org) or call 925-943-7469.



audience shouts out which classic episode they want to see next,” explains Synergy Theater’s Artistic Director, Kenn Adams. “Like ‘The one where she gets arrested!’ or ‘The one where she drives her car into the lake!’ And, then, whatever they shout out, we improvise that episode of the show.”

“It’s really very unique for an improv show,” says veteran company member Lynn Shields, “Because we play the same people for the entire run of the show. Each night, we’ll do three different episodes of the same make-believe TV show and the audience will get to see the same characters in those three different stories. And, by the end, you really get the feeling that you know these people, just the way you do with your favorite characters from



## CALENDAR continued from page 7

**February 10**  
**Wine and Chocolate Stroll** – 2:30 – 5:30 Downtown Martinez. Admission \$20-\$30

## VISUAL ARTS/THEATRE/MUSIC

**Blue Devils B Audition Fri, Jan 19, 2018, 6:00 PM** – Mon, Jan 22, 2018, 5:00 PM Mt. Diablo High School, 2450 Grant Street Concord. If you are auditioning for Blue Devils B, you also receive a coupon to attend the Be A Blue Devil For A Day workshop for FREE. The coupon is included in the audition materials, available after audition registration. More information at [bluedevils.org](http://bluedevils.org)

**Roxx on Main Street** Music Events  
January 12 – Kieth Roberson, Dan Deshara  
January 13 – Jay Olson, Reminisce  
January 19 – Kyle Jester, Killbillies  
January 26 – Alexa Heine, Richard Ke-

arns’ Band of Brothers January 27 – Greasy Rich, Born Lucky Band. Dinner Reservations accepted, Hours 4pm-11pm, 627 Main St. Martinez

**January 10**  
Comedy with Liz Grant & Friends: Headliner Carla Clay: She works clean and she’s just plain funny! Featuring: Phil Griffiths & Liz Grant Tickets \$17 Advance, \$20 at Door. Village Theatre 233 Front St. Danville

**January 18-21**  
“Spontaneous Sitcom” Lesher Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek, 1601 Civic Drive. Show times and tickets available at [www.lesherartcenter.org](http://www.lesherartcenter.org) or call 925-943-7469.

**February 8**  
Jazz Harpist Motoshi Kosako will perform Modern Jazz, Blues, Samba, Bossa Nova and classical styles. His compositions include unique techniques invented by him that make the harp sound like a guitar. He also uses virtuosic authentic harp tech-



## parentfootprints

by Dr. Dan Peters [www.DrDanPeters.com](http://www.DrDanPeters.com)

## Let Shame Go and Live Your Life Fully in 2018

It is the time of year when we choose a “resolution,” usually consisting of something to work on such as lose weight, exercise more; personal improvement as in yell less, manage anger; or set a goal like join a gym, or perhaps volunteer.

While it can be cliché to only think about these things at the end of the year even though we think about them often throughout the year, the new year provides an opportunity for a fresh start. It allows us to close the door on our past year’s challenges, pain, and joy, and look ahead with a clean slate with endless possibilities.

I have had the privilege to sit with people daily and bear witness to their journey, aspirations, and dreams. I realize that as humans, there is one thing that keeps people from not only meeting and sustaining their New Years resolutions, but also keeps them from experiencing joy and living to their potential. This one thing is shame.

Everyone experiences shame. Whether we are punished and humiliated by a parent, sibling, or family member; experienced abuse or mistreatment; publicly humiliated by a teacher; bullied by a classmate; laughed at for our appearance or awkwardness; failed at something that was important to us; or abandoned by a friend or family member, we have felt shame.

Shame is that painful feeling caused by the consciousness or exposure of unworthy or indecent conduct or circumstances (<https://www.thefreedictionary.com/shame>), or a feeling of guilt, regret, or sadness that you have because you know you have done something wrong. (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shame>).

The essential point is that shame doesn’t feel good and can permeate our being. It keeps us from believing in ourselves as we hide from both internal negative feelings of guilt and regret, and from being “found out” by others for whom we really are. It is like an invisible scar that never leaves. It often comes in the form of negative soft internal voices or thoughts that we are not good enough, don’t deserve success and happiness,

and creates large spaces for improvisation. Jazz Room at Village Theatre, 233 Front St. Danville.

## SUPPORT GROUPS

**Al-Anon Family Group** 7:30 p.m. Mondays, St. Martins of Tours Anglican Church & Preschool, Concord. 932-6770 or [www.ncwsa.org](http://www.ncwsa.org).

**Alcoholics Anonymous** – 925-939-4155 or [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org). Bereavement Support Group: 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month, 4:30 - 6:00 pm. pre-registration. Call 925) 887-5681

**Adult Day Services Network of Contra Costa** – (925)682-1000 490 Golf Club Rd. Pleasant Hill – [www.adultdaycc.org](http://www.adultdaycc.org)

**Alzheimer’s Respite Day Program** (925) 370-8772 1111 Ferry St. Martinez – Activities and lunch for elders with dementia in a supervised setting. Wednesdays 10 am-4 pm.

and are “less than” others. We take this unwanted companion with us to work, on vacations, and to all our relationships including our friends, significant others, and our children.

We want to forget those painful and embarrassing experiences. We want them to just go away and pretend they don’t affect us anymore. Unfortunately, that hope and strategy doesn’t work so well. We still can lack confidence, doubt ourselves, fear taking a risk and failing. We can believe that others are more qualified, more worthy, and more lovable than we are. I have news for you. It’s not true. You are just as good, just as lovable, just as worthy, and have every right and opportunity to experience joy and happiness in your life and pursue your dreams. While shame is the one thing that is likely keeping you from fully living the life you want, there is one thing that can help you move beyond your shame. That one thing is accepting yourself for who you are and realizing that you are enough.

I know it sounds too simple, but it’s true. You can choose, right now to accept and love yourself. By love, I mean care and appreciate yourself with your quirks, flaws, and uniqueness. Accept who you are and acknowledge your strengths and goodness.

Forgive yourself for past mistakes and realize that they do not define you. If you were humiliated, put down, and embarrassed as a child, those experiences don’t define who you are. If you were mistreated or abused, tell yourself that you did not deserve it and that you are worthy and loved.

You can choose to let shame go. You don’t need it anymore. You can choose to tell yourself daily that you are worthy and lovable. Do it for yourself. Do it for your children.

I challenge you to let shame go in 2018 and live your life fully. I challenge you to be open to life’s possibilities and believe you deserve happiness. You are just fine the way you are. You don’t have to change, but you must accept yourself and see where this acceptance will take you.

Wishing you the best in the New Year.

**Alzheimer’s Association** (925) 284-7942 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Suite 250 Lafayette [www.alz.org/norcal](http://www.alz.org/norcal)

## Breast Cancer Support Group FREE

For women coping with breast cancer. Guest oncology experts present information and tools to assist in coping and sharing experiences. Meets every second Thursday of the month from 11am-12:30pm. Please call (925) 933-0107 for more info or to register.

**The Bridge** - A bi-weekly support program for grieving children and teens using art, play, journaling, music and conversation. Support is also available for parents/guardians. This group runs during the school year. Preregistration is required—dates of sessions will be distributed at that time. Alternating Tuesdays to accommodate school schedules, 6:00-7:30 pm September 2017 - June 2018 Valhalla Elementary School, 530 Kiki Drive, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

**CalFresh (Food Stamps)** Central County

**SUPPORT GROUPS** continues page 13

## Changing Children's Lives Through Food



As owner of the Sunrise Bistro and Catering of Walnut Creek and founder of the non-profit Wellness City Challenge and the Sustainable Hospitality Program, Cindy Gershen is an innovative leader in our community, farm-to-table foods and nutrition. As a teacher in the Mt. Diablo School District, she brings her culinary skills to integrate nutrition, science, and the environment to her education programs taking a preventative approach to the obesity/diabetes epidemic occurring in the nation. Chef/Teacher Cindy Gershen has been awarded several awards for her health advocacy and is co-author of "The Fat Chance Cookbook." She tells her students "eat well to be well out in the world."

The Clayton Valley Woman's Club

(CVWC) invites guests to attend their monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 9 at St. John's Episcopal Church, 5555 Clayton Rd., and hear Cindy Gershen, Chef/Teacher, talk about "Changing Children's Lives Through Food." Meeting begins at 10:00 am. Gershen speaks at 11:00 am.

The CVWC is a local non-profit organization of women serving our local communities. They have been active since 1972 giving both time and monies to many local organizations plus scholarships. For more information, call Linda at 415-652-3503 or Sheila at 925-672-7947.

*Picture: Cindy Gershen, center, with her Mt. Diablo School District students*

# Out to Lunch

## Top local places to eat for \$10

by Richard Eber

Those of us who work locally, who don't bring food from home for our noon meal, always find ourselves looking for local restaurants who are, fast, friendly, tasty, and economical. Fortunately, there are a lot of choices available in the \$10 to \$12 range that fulfill these needs. These choices are entirely subjective with the goal of introducing a spectrum of affordable international cuisines. There are certainly many establishments that belong on this list, but I can only highlight a couple at a time each month.

**Jack's Urban Eats** - Located in the Orchards Shopping Center in Walnut Creek, this popular

cafeteria-style restaurant offers a small menu of salads, steak, whole turkey, and comfort foods that are consistently better than just about any other competitor in the region. All salads are custom made where they select between 15 different ingredients that will go into their bowl. The Urban Eats difference is their quality;

from homemade dressing to their out-of-the-croutons. Jack's calling card is the perfectly prepared tri-tip which can be served on a salad, sandwich, or as part of



Owners Austin Fauci and Lucas Jacobs

a plate lunch with garlic, or loaded mash potatoes and gravy. Hot dishes are delivered to tables. In short, they offer high quality cuisine at modest pricing. 862 Ygnacio Valley Rd., Walnut Creek.

**Rocco's Ristorante Pizzeria** - This popular Walnut Creek restaurant attracts



sports enthusiasts, families, and just about everyone else. Unlike most places that offer pizza, Rocco's has a full menu of other dishes. They offer a full range of low priced pasta combinations that reminds me of second tier North Beach Italian restaurants I grew up with in San Francisco. Especially good is their linguini with clams, tortellini Alfredo, and of course the traditional spaghetti with meat balls.

Recently, I had PEI mussels in a spicy tomato sauce that was well priced in the \$10 range. There are several sandwich choices including calamari and Italian sausage served with a hearty cup of house-made minestrone soup. The new item on their menu is Polenta filled with mushrooms and spinach covered with melted Gorgonzola cheese and marinara sauce. Yum. All of this with Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra singing in the background. Life is good. 2909 Ygnacio Valley Rd., Walnut Creek.

Watch for more places in the next issue of The Diablo Gazette.

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**frugelegance**by Carol and Randi -The Frugirls [www.fruelegance.com](http://www.fruelegance.com)

## Low-Carb Cheese Crisps

You don't need a New Year's resolution or be on one of those low-carb diets to enjoy these delicious cheese crisps. Actually, that is how we came across them. I started going low-carb a few months ago and a friend recommended trying cheese crisps as a substitute for crackers. It was love at first bite. I totally loved them. Unfortunately, they are crazy expensive for a small size package. So, we decided to make them ourselves.

Big bonus! They are extremely easy to make and fun to tweak by adding different kinds of seeds. Plain or with seeds, they are absolutely satisfying and delicious.



with your fingers, place onto a parchment paper covered cookie sheet. Bake on 375° for 5-10 minutes depending on your preferences. The cheese will melt, flatten, and sizzle. Remove from the oven when the edges brown.

We tried several recipe variations. The amounts and ingredients are super flexible, so use per your preferences. This is our absolute favorite combination of ingredients.

- 2 cups Shredded Parmigiano Reggiano Cheese (Kirkland's brand at Costco)
- 1 cup Shredded Parmigiano Cheese (Stella brand cheese shreds, at our local



Safeway grocery store)

- 1/2 Shredded Romano Cheese
  - 2 TBSP Grated Parmigiano Cheese
  - Roasted Sesame Seeds
  - Black Sesame Seeds
  - Hempseed (like Chia seeds, with higher protein & has a nutty flavor)
  - Raw Pumpkin Seeds
  - Other ingredients that go well: Poppy Seeds, Sunflower Seeds, Chia.
- \*\*FYI, do NOT add any salt at all. The cheese is salty all on its own.

**Directions:**

Prepare the cookie sheet with parchment paper. If using hempseed in the ingredients bake at 350°, if not adding hempseed bake at 375°. Mix all ingredients together. A teaspoon is a good thing to use if making small crisps. A tablespoon is a good size when making larger crisps. Just allow a little room around each because the cheese will spread a little when it melts. When golden brown edges and cheese is flat and sizzling, remove from oven and set aside to cool.

They are awesome with guacamole. They go so well with soup, crumble them in a salad, top with cold cuts, the sky is the limit. ad off course, you can enjoy them plain for a good "nosh", aka snack.

*Carol and Randi, the Frugirls, are local home stagers and decorators. You can also find them Blogging about many other ways to live an elegant life for less at [www.fruelegance.com](http://www.fruelegance.com) FrugElegance is where Frugal and Elegance come together.*

## Where's the Meat? Plant-Based Burger Joint Opens in Concord

You won't find any meat and you probably won't even notice it when eating Next Level Burger all-vegan burgers. NLB offers 100 percent plant-based burgers, hot dogs and breakfast options and is opened next to 365 Whole Foods in the Veranda Shopping Center in Concord.

After an extraordinary launch in Bend, Oregon in 2014, and successful expansion in Seattle, Next Level Burger is reinventing the classic American burger experience, making it crave-worthy, healthy and satisfying. Founders Cierra and Matt de Gruyter have a huge hit on their hands and have enjoyed an ever-growing passionate fan base.

Next Level Burger serves up over a dozen burger combinations, all sustainably sourced, non-GMO, with all-organic produce. As with any burger joint they also serve a full complement of sides



including fries, tots, and dairy-free shakes in several flavors. View their complete menu Online at [www.nextlevelburgers.com](http://www.nextlevelburgers.com).

Enthusiasts describe Next Level Burger as a game changer, whether you are a plant-based eater or not. People can still have everything they ever wanted in an American burger joint. Now with all of the planet-friendly food, these are 'Burgers for a Better World.'

"We couldn't be more excited to bring America's first 100-percent, plant-based burger joint to the Bay Area," says Matthew de Gruyter. "We've been honored by requests to bring Next Level Burger to Northern California ever since we opened up our very first location, and now we're thrilled to debut our flagship location with our friends at the new Whole Foods Market 365 in Concord."

**farmerfresh**

by Debra Morris, Pacific Coast Farmers Market

<http://www.pcfma.org/concord>

## Kumquats, You Say?

Tasting sweet and juicy on the inside and bitter on the outside, the kumquat is a small oval fruit from the citrus family.

Buy kumquats with bright, smooth skins that feel a bit heavy for their small size. Avoid kumquats with bruises, cuts, or blemishes of any kind, the edible skin is more delicate and tender than that of other citrus fruits, and also more susceptible to damage.

Eat or use kumquats as soon after purchasing as you can. Unlike other citrus fruits, kumquats don't have a long shelf life. If you do need to store them for a few days, keep kumquats in a paper bag or loosely wrapped in plastic in the fridge. Kumquats make a great snack or light dessert eaten out of hand, or added whole or halved to fruits salads.



There are also tangy limequats and other small, brightly flavored crosses. Taking into consideration their inherent flavor differences, they make a great addition to your recipes, just as kumquats can. They are also good when eaten right out of the bag, peel and all.

They are a great addition to crisp winter salads. They can also be canned and preserved and are delicious over ice cream or plain yogurt. There

are various crossed varieties now appearing at your local market. Mandarinquats are obviously a cross between a Mandarin orange and a kumquat. Limequats – kumquats and limes. Available through April, pick up some of these little gems directly from local farmers at your farmers' market. You won't find any fresher or better tasting anywhere else. Stop by Diaz Farms of Fowler and fill your bag with this fun winter fruit.

### Baby Kale Salad with Kumquats, Farro, and Avocados

- 1/2 lbs. of baby kale, loose
- 1 whole Hass avocado, peeled and diced to desired size
- 1/2 cup of cooked farro, tossed with olive oil and salt
- 1/2 cup kumquats, thinly sliced
- Good quality olive oil to taste
- Juice of a Meyer lemon to taste
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Mix the ingredients in a large bowl and toss gently with your hands. Taste, correct seasonings, and serve. Recipe: Cookin' the Market, PCFMA



## Who is Your Realtor? Our realtor has answers...

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# January Local Art Exhibits

## TOPS Exhibit Returns to aRt Cottage

The Transition Options Program (TOPS) will be returning for its second ever art exhibit at aRt Cottage.

TOPS is a program that addresses the unique needs of post high school adults with Aspergers Syndrome, High Functioning Autism and related disorders. These students are

transitioning to higher education, independent living and/or employment.

It all began when participants in this program walked by the aRt Cottage. At that time, Fro, the owner of aRt Cottage, invited them

to come in for a tour and see the art in the gallery, explore the garden, and enjoy some of the flowers and sculptures. Several of the students commented on some of the pieces on the wall, and explained that anyone who wants to show

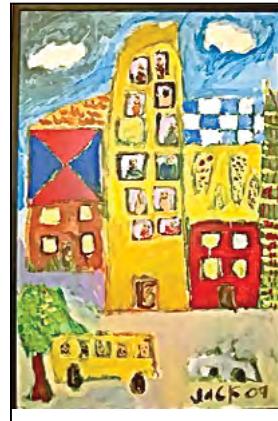
their art at the aRt Cottage is welcome.

Eric Johnson, the TOPS instructor, then proceeded to ask his students if they would like to exhibit their work which they did in October of 2016 with much success.

The TOPS program is uniquely designed to address the individual needs of participants as they select their class schedule based on the following four core areas of instruction: Social/Relationship Skills; Career Exploration and Preparation/College Success; Independent Living Skills; Community Access and Resources.

aRt Cottage clearly had a positive impact on these students as they are excited to return and show their work, have a fun party and reception, and invite friends and family for a social time there.

We hope many can find time to visit aRt Cottage's TOPS show during January, located at 2238 Mt. Diablo St. Concord.



## Art Exhibit at Boundary Oaks Golf Course

Suzy Elsworth-Heithcock is in a new two-man show at the Boundary Oaks Golf Course in Walnut Creek with fellow artist Linda Huffman. The show runs through January 14, from 9am to 5pm. There will be about 30 paintings on exhibit with many very detailed local nature scenes, as well as other subjects ranging from Italian door knockers to Hawaiian Banyan trees.



## “Small Wall” is Back at Main Street Arts

Main Street Arts announces for the month of January it will be going “small”. Yes, the “Small Wall” is back, full of small masterpieces for your home or office. Main Street Arts has 11 member artists that create silver jewelry, ceramics, clay sculpture, metal sculpture, glassware, paintings, and photography. Open Wednesday to Saturday from 12 noon to 4pm and Sunday 10am to 2 pm at 613 Main Street in Martinez. [mainstreetarts.net](http://mainstreetarts.net)



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*“Eat butter first, and eat it last, and live till a hundred years be past.” ~Old Dutch proverb*

## Blueberry Zucchini Bread

Ah...January, how we love thee so. We look at the calendar and realize that the past two months have been filled with a non-stop eating fest and our pants are a little on the tight side. It isn't your fault little January, but for some reason a crazy person came up with this strange idea of “New Years Resolutions”. Most people set that crazy goal to lose that holiday weight, well I'm here to tell you that I am not that kind of person! So, on that note, this recipe is super “healthy”. It involves this special ingredient called zucchini and can be considered a diet food. [Editors note: Ha! Not!]

### Blueberry Zucchini Bread

3 cups flour  
1 1/2 tsp salt  
1 1/2 tsp baking powder  
1/4 tsp baking soda  
1 TBSP ground cinnamon  
1/2 tsp ground nutmeg  
3 eggs  
1 cup canola oil  
1 1/2 TBSP vanilla extract  
2 1/4 cups sugar  
2 cups shredded zucchini  
1 pint fresh blueberries

Preheat oven to 350. Lightly grease 4 mini loaf pans. In a large bowl, mix all the dry ingredients. In a separate mixing

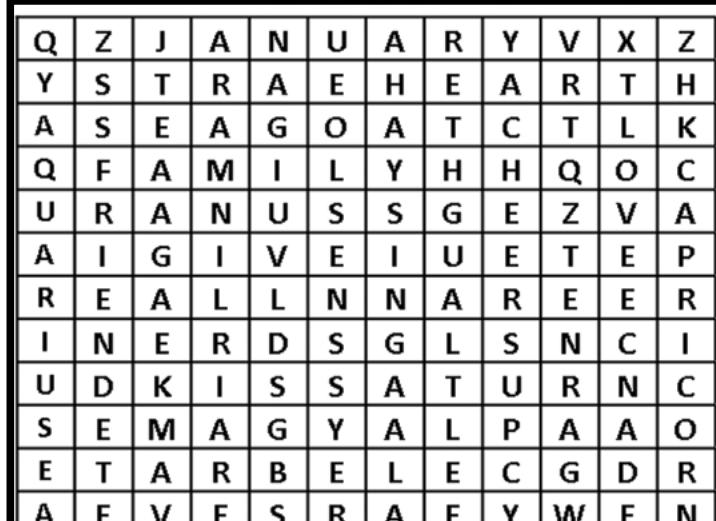
Mrs. Butterbanks, aka Sam Bowerbank, always finds the time in the middle of her busy schedule to destroy her kitchen one concoction at a time. With the freshest ingredients gathered from her backyard garden, along with eggs from her chickens, she creates beautiful, tasty dishes and desserts. You'll find more of her fabulous recipes on her blog [butterrequired.wordpress.com](http://butterrequired.wordpress.com).



bowl, beat eggs, oil, sugar, and vanilla. Stir in the flour mixture until well blended. Fold in zucchini and blueberries. Pour into prepared pans.

Note: if you peel your zucchini before shredding, no one will be the wiser, good way to trick the kiddos!

Crumb Topping  
Mix together:  
2/3 cup flour  
1/2 cup brown sugar  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 tsp cinnamon  
1 stick (1/2 cup) butter, softened  
1/2 cup chopped nuts (optional)  
Crumble this on top of your bread batter and bake for 45-50 minutes. Test it with a knife in the center, if it comes out clean. Remove from the oven and let cool.



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## Readers Rants & Raves

"I was telling a co-worker how much I love the Diablo Gazette. Your paper is fun to read. It's light and happy... it isn't like the news today. I really enjoy your paper." – *L. Cruz, Clayton*

"Thank you for your excellent articles that you published telling my story "East Germany to Clayton". Because of it, my Rotary Club has asked me to speak to them." – *Ingrid Hempell, Clayton*

"I got October and December issues, but must have missed November. I've been following "From Auschwitz to America" and the other one "East Germany to Clayton." How can I obtain a November issue? This is a great little maga-

zine. I look forward to it each month. Not just that one article. There are a lot of other interesting articles in here. Like the one about the inmates and their Santa's workshop. There is good information in here. Thank you." – *Cathleen, Clayton*

"I wanted to let you know that I saved all three months of Diablo Gazette, so that I could re-read the three chapters of the article "From Auschwitz to America" as one complete story, as well as the "East Germany to Clayton" story. They are very good stories." – *BA, Concord*

"My Facebook received a video feed of Will Farrell's 'Funny or Die' with a Trump

impersonator singing a Trump version of 'White Christmas.' It reminded me of your December article "20 Politically Charged Holiday Hits" where you also listed "White Christmas" as Trump's #2 Christmas

song title." – *D.M., Pleasant Hill*

*The Diablo Gazette looks forward to all comments from our readers.*

*Please email: [diablogazette@gmail.com](mailto:diablogazette@gmail.com)*

### Power Hang Glider over Cal State East Bay

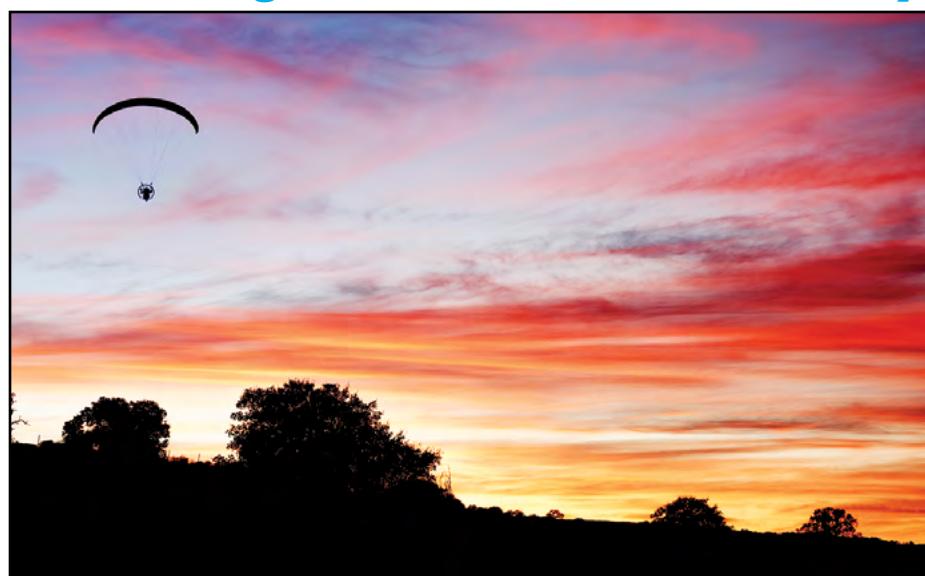
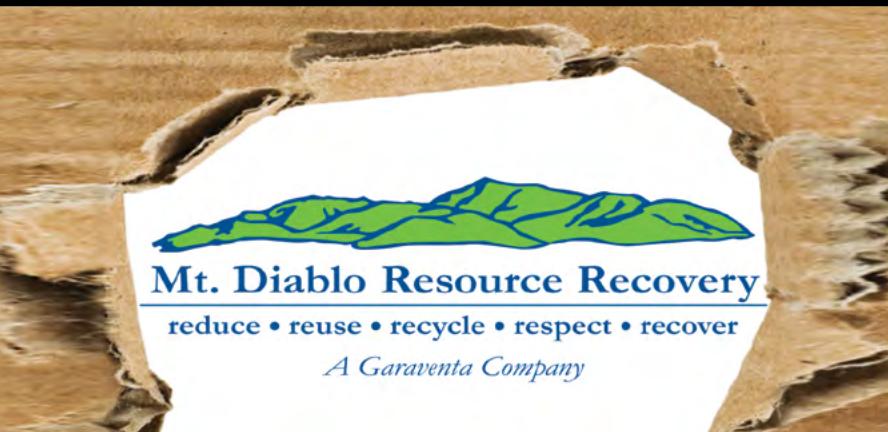


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## Star Wars: The Last Jedi

but not the last movie!

**There are NO SPOILERS in this review:** Reviews that have to tell you the story are not reviewing, but revealing.

There are two distinct groups of Star Wars fans; those who enjoy the fun, galactic tale of Luke Skywalker's adventures to become a Jedi Knight, and his battles against the evil empire; and those who devour every morsel of mythos as though it were a tangible and essential part of their lives. Thus, writing a review on this film (series) is a daunting task, certain to offend one group or another.

Having lived through four decades of Star Wars, beginning as a young man enamored with the magic of this epic space story, the philosophy of a Force deity that somehow binds all parts of the living universe together, and now as an older, wiser, and certainly more jaded, human being, the series represents a large part of my adult life, in addition to being a fun set of films. First, let's recap.

Following The Force Awakens, many fans were upset with the deviations from keeping the core originals intact. With the death of Han Solo (Harrison Ford), and a new group of Force sensitives, Rey (Daisy Ridley) and Finn (John Boyega), as well as a new droid, the gang found themselves, along with General Leia Organa (the late Carrie Fisher,) back in the same old circle.

The resistance is still resisting, and the emperor, and his empire, though gone, are now embodied in the empirical First Order with the mysterious—and even more powerful than the emperor—evil Sith being, Snoke (Andy Serkis.)

TFA was a nice homecoming for those of us absent from the Star Wars prime storyline, the Skywalker storyline. But since, Han and Leia's son, Ben, while being trained by Luke, had been turned to the dark side of the Force, desperately emulating the evil image of his grandfather, Darth Vader. Renamed Kylo Ren (Adam Driver), he is oblivious to grandpa's return to the light side—moments before his death—and instead worships the old, broken, Vader mask.

After a clash with Rey, who surprisingly nearly bests him, leaving one of those nasty scars across his face, Ren has his training completed by Snoke.

At the end of TFA, Rey finds Luke, holds out his old lightsaber for him to take, as we viewers swirl around them to the closing credits.

Okay, you are now caught up.

In The Last Jedi we find Luke, isolated and not prepared to train yet another potential Jedi, fearing failure, wanting to be left alone. He has learned one lesson; that Jedi and Sith are just two parts of a greater whole of the Force. It is time to end both, in his mind.

Meanwhile, Snoke, having trained Kylo Ren, has him facing off against Rey by manipulating events. Will she turn to the dark side? Who are her parents? Will Leia die (as Carrie Fisher did in real life) or will she find some way to get Luke back. After all, TFA and this movie complete the arc of that purpose. Does Finn die? And why are there no bathrooms on the Falcon?

This film is busy with the usual effects. The John Williams score pulls us back to the original film, through all the thematic



variations we have seen in Episodes I through VII, adding new strains of emotive melodies.

Most of the film time is spent with the embattled rebels attempting to achieve just one or two goals, and with major turnabouts and character arcs, some of which will annoy viewers for a very long time. And in the end, the question of whether Luke will return to help restore peace in the galaxy, is answered in a new way, a way that may annoy those loyalists of the Star Wars canon who cannot see past 40 years, to a new hope (no pun intended.)

It's been 40 years for the heroes we first cheered, the very first time. Time has not been so kind on some actors, despite the endurance of the franchise. But as is always the case in life, the old makes way for the new, not unlike old Obi-Wan giving way to Luke to become a Jedi.

There are new heroes in the making, and you can see that they are being set up for more post-Star Wars IX films. New stories, new discoveries. But for those of us who still recall the thrill the first time a lightsaber was activated, The Last Jedi is a reminder that the new audiences, even though they have seen the original trilogy, were not there during that time of optimism, when film was fresh, idealistic, and not milked for every last cent that a sequel could bring.

Nonetheless, the film is very enjoyable, poignant in parts, ironic in others, nostalgic to a degree, and hopeful with young Rey, Finn, Poe and others now finding their places in the worlds of this iconic series.

If you close your eyes, stretch out your feelings, and breathe...just breathe, you, too, can feel the Force surround you, flow through you, and bind you to that—still lovely—fanfare theme from a long, long time ago....

4-Stars if you just enjoy Star Wars  
2-Stars if you are a die-hard Star Wars fan-analyst

Written & Directed by Rian Johnson.  
Cast: Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Adam Driver, Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Oscar Isaac, Andy Serkis, Lupita Nyong'o, Domhnall Gleeson, Anthony Daniels, and Gwendoline Christie in returning roles, with Kelly Marie Tran, Laura Dern, and Benicio del Toro joining.

## SUPPORT GROUPS continued from page 8

(925) 602-9379 400 Ellinwood Way, Pleasant Hill – issues monthly electronic benefits similar to a bank card that can be used to buy most foods. Apply on-line or call or in person, [www.mybenefitscalwin.org](http://www.mybenefitscalwin.org)

**Cardiac Care Support Group** - 7 p.m. second Thursdays, John Muir Walnut Creek or Concord. 947-5206.

**Fibromyalgia Support Group** - 2nd Friday of each month. 11 A.M. - 1 P.M. Concord Library, 2900 Salvio St. Concord. More info: Call Joyce 925-671-2779

**Concord Neuropathy Support** – 1:30 p.m. 3rd Thursday of every month at the First Christian Church, 3039 Willow Pass Rd. Concord For more information call 925-685-0953

**Diabetes Support Group** sponsored by American Diabetes Association (ADA) -FREE. Support for those diagnosed with diabetes and their friends and families. Meets the second Saturday of the month 9:30 - 11:30am at John Muir Health Walnut Creek 1601 Ygnacio Valley Rd.

**Debtors Anonymous (DA)** meets every Friday Night 7:15 to 8:30 PM, First Baptist Church, 1802 Alhambra Ave. Martinez. Call (925) 228-9111 or go to: [www.debtorsanonymous.org](http://www.debtorsanonymous.org).

**Drop-In Grief Support Groups for Adults** - Drop-in groups meet twice per month to provide support for anyone grieving the death of someone close to them. No registration required. 1st & 3rd Thursdays of each month, 4:30-6:00 pm 3470 Buskirk Avenue, Pleasant Hill. 2nd & 4th Thursdays of each month, 4:30-6:00 pm John Muir Urgent Care Center (Large Conference Room) 2400 Balfour Road, Suite 223, Brentwood

**Hearing Loss and Cochlear Implant Wearers Support Group** - 7 p.m. 1st Wednesdays, Walnut Creek United Methodist Church. [HLAADV@hearinglossdv.org](mailto:HLAADV@hearinglossdv.org) or 264-1199.

**Hospice East Bay Support Groups** and classes except drop-in, require pre-registration. Call (925) 887-5681 or [email griefservices@hospiceeastbay.org](mailto:griefservices@hospiceeastbay.org). Bereavement Services are provided free of charge to all community members. Calendar at <https://hospiceeastbay.org/services/griefsupport/groups-classes>

**LS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) Support Group** FREE. This Group provides education and support for those with ALS and their families and friends. Meets the

3rd Saturday of the month from 1-3:00pm. Please call 818-865-8067 for more information.

**Meals On Wheels (MOWSOS)** Senior services including care management, fall prevention, health and wellness, congregate meals, caregiver training, home delivered meals. (925) 937-8311 1300 civic dr. Walnut Creek [www.mowsos.org](http://www.mowsos.org)

**Pet Loss Support Group** - In a nurturing small group, you are encouraged to process natural feelings of grief resulting from the loss of a beloved animal. No registration required. 2nd Tuesday of each month, 5:30-7:00 pm. Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation, 2890 Mitchell Drive, Walnut Creek

**Parent Loss Support Group** - This eight-week support group is for any adult who has experienced the death of one or both parents. The group is most helpful if you are at least three months past the death of your parent(s). A short phone assessment is required before registration is complete. Tuesday Evenings, 6:00-8:00 pm Jan 9 - Feb 27, 2018; 3470 Buskirk Avenue, Pleasant Hill

**Spouse & Partner Loss Support Group** - This eight-week support group is for men and women who have experienced the death of a spouse or partner. The group is most helpful if you are at least three months past the death of your spouse. A short phone assessment is required before registration is complete. Monday Evenings, 1:00-3:00 pm February 26 - April 16 ; 3470 Buskirk Avenue, Pleasant Hill

**STAND! For Families Free of Violence** – shelter, counseling, job placement, and legal assistance for battered women and family members affected by violence. 24 hr. Crisis line 888-215-555 [www.standf-fov.org](http://www.standf-fov.org)

**HIV/AIDS Support Group** - 7-9 p.m. 2nd & 4th Thursdays, John Muir Concord. 925- 674-2190.

**John Muir Behavioral Health Center** 2740 Grant Street Concord. Call 925-942-0767 or [www.namicontracosta.org](http://www.namicontracosta.org)

**Leukemia Society Family Support Group** - 7 p.m. first Thursdays. 947-4466, ext. 32797.

**Veterans Crisis Line**, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – National suicide prevention line for veterans. Online chat. <http://veteranscrisis.net> 800-273-8255 24 hours

## Views of the Valley



The Tomo Yara Band, from City of Concord's sister city, Kitakami, Japan performs American standards, Irish folk tunes and folk-rock fused with Far East acoustics with traditional Japanese instruments at the East-West Fusion Music, Beers and Food benefit on at Epidemic Ales in Concord.



Two members of the Tomo Yara Band are excited to be taking this priceless souvenir back to Concord's Sister city, Kitakami, Japan. Hosted by Concord Ambassadors.

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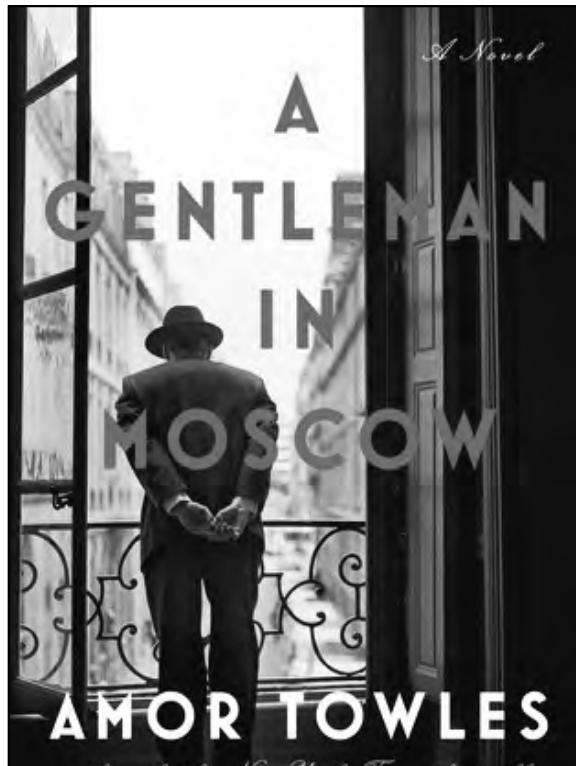
by Jill Hedgecock, Program Coordinator Mount Diablo California  
Writer's Club [jillhedgecock.com](http://jillhedgecock.com)

## A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles

A secret key, a young girl's curiosity, and a man under house arrest lead to an unlikely pair sleuthing through the bowels of a Russian hotel. These elements make *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles (2016, Viking, hardcover, 480 pages, \$16.20) an intriguing premise. Towles' inclusion of Russian history further lay the groundwork for an epic reading experience. It is a lengthy tome spanning three decades and requires readers to pay careful attention. Rest assured, it's worth the effort. According to Towles, "Bit characters, passing remarks, incidental objects come swirling together and play essential roles in bringing the narrative to its sharply pointed conclusion."

Count Alexander Rostov is an aristocrat survivor of the bloody aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Although spared death, he must live within the confines of the Metropol Hotel, situated near the Kremlin. While all the characters in the book are imagined, the Metropol is based on an existing historic hotel located in central Moscow. In addition to its intriguing setting and main character, Towles infuses the story with a compelling supporting cast. In contrast to the stiff, yet genteel, Rostov, movie star, Anna Urbanova, and her two borzois, bring levity and glamour to lighten the pages. Anna also brings romance into housebound Rostov's life. Equally compelling are Rostov's male friendships from the ne'er-do-well American vending machine salesman to Mishka, Rostov's boyhood chum provide insights into the extent of Rostov's charm. When young Sophia enters his life, Rostov is jolted from his comfortable routines as he embraces fatherly responsibilities. Of course, no good book is without its villain and the incompetent waiter, Bishop Leplevshy with his antagonistic personality and

a penchant for snooping into Rostov's affairs, fills that literary role quite well. Like many accomplished novelists, Towles interweaves elements of other



great creative works into his story—in this case, the movie, Casablanca. The book also has an inherent quirkiness to its structure. All of the chapter titles begin with the letter "A."

*A Gentleman in Moscow* is a New York Times bestseller and was ranked as one of the best books of 2016 by the Chicago Tribune, the Miami Herald and others. Amor Towles graduated from Yale College and received an MA in English from Stanford University. His first novel, *Rules of Civility*, published in 2011, was a New York Times bestseller and ranked by the Wall Street Journal as one of the best books of 2011. Both of Towles' novels have been translated into over fifteen languages. This hefty read is the perfect book to escape into on a cold, rainy January day.

## Novelist Amana McTigue Coming to CA Writers Club



She will lead an interactive session on how to craft a pitch of your work, practicing your pitch, and overcoming nerves. Members and guests are encouraged to bring a one-sentence pitch, a 50 words-or-fewer pitch, and a pitch you'd like to work on.

Ms. McTigue has published her debut novel, "Going to Solace", and her works for the stage have been produced at Carnegie Hall, the Minnesota Opera, and through collaborations with Disney and Paramount Entertainment. One of her short stories was nominated for a Pushcart prize. She is currently researching her second novel, set in Cuba.

Sign-in begins at 11:00 am, luncheon from 12:00 pm to 12:45 pm, and speaker from 1:00 pm-2:00 pm. The cost is \$25 for CWC members, \$30 for guests.

Reservations are required, and must be received no later than noon on Wednesday, January 10. To reserve, go to California Writer's Club Mt. Diablo branch website at: <http://cwcmtdiablo.org>

Novelist, stage director, and performance coach Amana McTigue will present "Pitching: Telling the Story of Your Story" at the next luncheon meeting of the Mt. Diablo Branch of the California Writers Club (CWC) on Saturday, January 13, 2018 at Zio Fraedo's Restaurant, 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill.

## How I Became Clayton's Romance Writer

by Phyllis Houseman



My husband Jack and I moved to Clayton in 1985 from Detroit, where we were born.

We met at eight years of age when my uncle married his aunt in a ceremony at Jack's home. Both our families were invited to dinner at the young couple's first apartment, where Jack and I decided to construct a secret code. We wrote to each other in code a few times, and then lost touch for almost twenty years.

We did cross paths, unknowingly, in a decade of Saturdays going to the same movie theater as students at the University of Michigan. We later found out that his hated roommate was the jerk I had gone with to my senior prom.

Our mutual uncle Frank was instrumental in our reunion. Jack was in the Army, but had come back to Detroit, from Germany, on a compassionate reassignment. I was home from two years in the Peace Corps in Ecuador, and was studying for my Master's in Science Education.

Uncle Frank had two tickets to a New Year's Eve party that he gave to Jack, mentioning that he had a niece Jack might like to take to the gala.

Jack called, and we talked for two hours on the phone. By our third date, we were engaged.

For the next few years, married, we had two children. Jack worked in media relations for a large bank, and I taught Biology in Detroit's inner city.

When Jack had the opportunity for a dream job in California, he took it and as a result, I became a romance novelist. It's a long story that I'll try to condense.

One Sunday morning Jack showed me an article about how much money romance writers could make, and suggested I try my hand at it, since I was not teaching.

Only I had never even read a romance novel, beyond Jane Eyre. Science fiction had been my passion since my early

teens. I would have been called a nerd if that title had been invented then.

But Jack reminded me that I had been a Peace Corps Volunteer and with infinite patience, he somehow convinced me that I had a story to tell.

We concocted a plot involving rival fraternal twins on an exotic hacienda, fighting over the fate of their late father's rare-book library, and over the love of the female expert who had come down from the United States to value their inheritance.

The two-hundred-page result, "Somewhere in Silence", didn't sell. It still hasn't, but five other books have, one earning a national Romance Writers of America award.

Jack has gone now, he died two years ago. We all mourned him, and miss him. But he left behind a legacy that helped me cope with profound sadness and morning depression.

I've slowly recovered the joy of writing he fostered in me. I'll have two short stories that will be published in the new year in the anthology, "Insight, Hindsight & Flights of Fancy", a joyful work of the writers group, Shadow of the Mountain Writers Guild.

Here are my five published books:

• **The Verdict is Love**—Set on a jury in Los Angeles, during a federal plagiarism case

• **To Catch a Lorelei**—Set in the San Diego area

• **Call Back Our Yesterdays**—Peace Corps novel, set partly in Ecuador and Clayton

• **There Is a Season**—A Romance Writers of America Award Winner, set on Mount St. Helens

• **Another New Year's Eve**—A Time Travel novel set in Monterey.

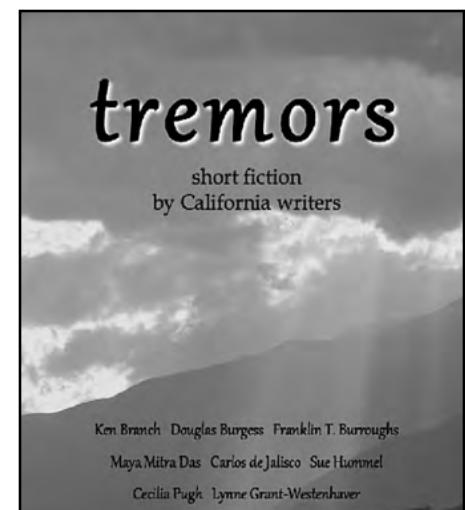
And about that story set in Southern Ecuador, "Somewhere in the Silence"—The first book I worked on with my husband, set in Southern Ecuador (which will have both our names as authors).

## Local Authors to Release Anthology, "Insight, Hindsight, and Flights of Fancy"

Shadow of the Mountain Writers Guild includes fourteen talented authors. Each author has a unique writing style, and several of them have published books, short stories and newspaper articles. The group's first anthology of short stories, "Tremors: Short Stories by California Writers" was published in 2014.

Eleven of the authors are producing a new anthology titled "Insight, Hindsight and Flights of Fancy."

Phyllis Houseman, an award-winning romance writer from Clayton; Walnut Creek's Franklin Burroughs, who was a former emissary from the Shah of Iran to Jimmy Carter; and author Robin Gigoux, "Chronicles of an Occupational Prostitute" also from Walnut Creek all have contributed to the anthology. Learn more at [bit.ly/2liIhoQ](http://bit.ly/2liIhoQ)



## ADVERTISER TESTIMONIAL

"Right on target, I have received a few comments on the article "Concord and Clayton is the Right Move" (September 2017), and the owner liked (seeing his listing in) the ad." — Terrylynn Fisher, Real Estate Broker



**theRIGHT move**  
by **Terrylynn Fisher, Broker Associate**  
Your Most Recent Market Data

As of December 17, 2017, in Clayton (94517) there are 10 homes on the market, and in Concord (entire city) there are 55 homes on the market. The Clayton average sold price in November 2017 is up 12% from November 2016. The Concord (94521) average sold price is up 14% from this year over November of 2016. It is interesting that most of those on the market at this time are reaching double digit days on market stats. This is a huge indicator of either a seasonal shift or balance coming to the market. Everything you read in the press says that there is shortage of homes on the market and if that is so, then what is wrong with the homes on the market that did not sell in a week?

There are two reasons homes sell, Price and Condition. The price point has to be right on target in order to get sold as in this market, once a home is on the market over a couple of weeks, buyers wonder what is wrong with it. There are a couple of statistics in addition to comparable sales that will help fine tune that price. Realtors do this for a living and are an amazing resource.

Condition is another huge factor in a quick sale. Whereas a buyer might have taken a home "as is" for some major things to fix a couple of years ago, as prices increase, they either cannot afford to take on extra projects that drain their discretionary income or just prefer a move-in ready home.

What to do? Trainer Christine Rae, Certified Staging Professionals (CSP) teaches staging concepts in her business

## Why Don't Homes Sell?

class on staging, and says "staging costs less than a price reduction". In that, she is right on target. Most sellers will tolerate a \$5000 to \$20000 or more price decrease if a home is not selling but don't want to invest in paint or repairs and/or stage it prior to market? This makes no sense. "Staging sells homes", statistics validate this time after time. Buyers make a first impression within seconds of entering the home. If their impression of the entry for example is cobwebs, chipped paint or a hard to open lock, they will go inside looking for more deficits.

If they find their first steps into the home minus any of these things and a clean, well-staged presence, they will begin to look for more things they like about the home. Keeping their focus on the positives, instead of the negatives can get your home SOLD when the others sit. And yes, it can be the little things that will derail a sale. Sellers will do well to take staging and condition recommendations seriously and then once staged, leave everything just the way it was presented. There is a science associated with staging. As Christine says, "Where the eye rests, the sale begins." Be sure the buyer's eye rests on the positive attributes of your home and you'll be the next home sold.

Terrylynn Fisher, Real Estate Broker Associate (CalBRE# 01882902) with Dudum Real Estate Group is a 35+ year veteran of real estate. (925)-876-0966 [www.BuyStageSell.com](http://www.BuyStageSell.com).

## We Are Missing the Boat on Small Business Saturday

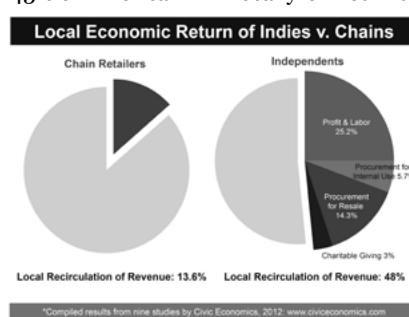
by Carol Ramirez

Make no mistake, the 2017 Holiday shopping season was strong for most retailers. Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Small Business Saturday were all successful marketing promotions. However, after several years of growth, Small Business Saturday saw a dip in both foot traffic and overall dollars spent in 2017. American Express and the National Federation of Independent Business reported traffic was down 3.5%, revenue down nearly 14%, while roughly 43% of American adults either shopped or dined small on that Saturday, nationally.

If we really want to help our local economy, we should have 52 Small Business Saturdays each year and 60+% of adults participating. After all, what makes my town my home are the small, locally owned and operated businesses. It is the gift shop that I find just the right and unique gift for my friend's birthday. It is the coffee shop that brews the perfect latte. In order to keep our community vibrant and thriving we need to shop local...ALL THE TIME. A small business cannot keep afloat if we only visit them on one Small Business Saturday.

As a little girl, I used to love going to our local music store. The records on the shelves, the guitars hanging from the ceiling, would fill my ear with wonder. What record would I find? The owner knew me and would suggest the latest Beatles record. Okay...I am giving my age away. My favorite moments were doing errands with my Mom. We would stop at the local nursery. They knew our names and what plants we needed. Then we would go to the local deli, and they would start making my regular sandwich before I got to the counter. I eventually worked at that local deli, and the owners and customers became my second family. I cherish these moments, and these memories feel like a warm hug. Unfortunately, my computer doesn't make those memories. Shopping online doesn't fill my soul with the human, tangible experience.

I communicate with businesses, restaurants, galleries, music stores, and florists



return twice as much to our local economy than chain restaurants per dollar of revenue." As for buying remotely on the web, these studies suggest "it creates almost no local benefit—just a few minutes' work for a delivery person."

(Source: <http://www.amiba.net/resources/multiplier-effect/>)

Shopping Online has its place in our capitalistic society, but it shouldn't be our only mode of commerce. Kudos to American Express for creating "Small Business Saturday"; but really, we can do better than one day a year - we need to do better than one day a year.

A state-by-state breakout shows the most popular small businesses visited on the day were restaurants, bars and pubs (41 percent), followed by clothing and accessories stores (24 percent), food stores (23 percent) and coffee shops (22 percent).

Shopping local creates more jobs, and supports more wages. Our local businesses give our communities character. They support our children's schools and support local sports, arts, schools, and donate to charities. We must keep these businesses thriving.

Carol Ramirez is a small business advertising, marketing and merchandising consultant for the gift, grocery, and natural foods industries. Send local advertising and promotions inquiries to [carol.r@diablogazette.com](mailto:carol.r@diablogazette.com).

## Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue

Each month a hard to place dog in foster care will be featured to give them extra exposure to find their forever home.



It's hard to understand why Blanche hasn't been snapped up, but for some reason this sweet gem has been overlooked. Blanche is a young mixed breed/

American Staffordshire terrier mix. This chocolate-colored girl with a splash of white on her chest was an amazing mom to her nine puppies, all of which have since been adopted. At approximately 50 pounds she is the perfect size to be a loving family pet. Blanche has been fostered in a home with active children and another large dog. Blanche loves human interaction and would do best in an active home where she would have lots of opportunity for running and playing. She is a *pawsitively special dawg*. Her adoption fee is \$275. She has been spayed, is up to date on vaccinations, and has been microchipped.

To meet Blanche, fill out an application at <http://www.ozziespoundpuppies.org/online-application/>. Ozzies Pound Puppies is an all breed dog rescue based in Concord, CA that rescues unwanted and abandoned dogs from the public and from shelters. Ozzies is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization funded by donations. You can help by fostering, adopt-

ing, volunteering or donating. Because rescues already know the personality and tendencies of their pets, they can match you with the right pet. If Blanche isn't a good fit, perhaps Ozzies has another dog that suits your needs.

UPDATES: Ruby Dooby Do is pleased to announce that Bradley Cooper, the first dog to appear in his column, has been adopted by his foster family. Good things have also happened to December's special dog, Bentley. He has received cataract surgery and is no longer blind. To inquire about adopting this adorable six-year-old deaf Maltese mix whose adoption fee has been sponsored, fill out an application form at <http://www.jotform.com/underdogca/dog-adoption-application>

Editors Note: Ruby Dooby Do is Concord's Instagram celebrity with more than 49,000 followers. [Instagram.com/rubydoobydo](http://Instagram.com/rubydoobydo). Special thanks to Jill Hedgecock, Program Coordinator, Mount Diablo Branch of the California Writers Club for her help in translating canine for this article. [www.jillhedgecock.com](http://www.jillhedgecock.com).

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## concordmayor

by Edi Birsan, Email me [CityCouncil@cityofconcord.org](mailto:CityCouncil@cityofconcord.org)  
Add EDI in subject line

## Unequal Representation in Regional Governance

When you vote for a City Councilmember you are selecting someone to set policy for your city, but you are also selecting someone who may be chosen to sit on a regional board such as ABAG, Association of Bay Area Governments, to represent your city and your interest in the greater community of cities or counties. The reason that City Council folks are sent is that they represent the closest electorate point to the residents at large. It also saves a ton of money by not having to have the regional bodies directly elect representatives with elections costing between \$2 and \$4 a voter just to administer it, with a campaign that revolves around complexities that directly affect the cities such as bus routes or the allocation of grant money from a regional collection pot for bike lanes or a road flyover.

If there were regional elections, then the interplay between candidates and special interest groups and affected financial institutions most likely would result in a skewed set of office holders. This is avoided by having the many City Council's select members to the bodies.

An interesting aspect of our democracy in regional governance is that each City Council is generally given the exact same vote power regardless of the size of the city. This results in some questionable ramifications.

For example, in the local committee Transportation Partnership and Cooperation, (Transpac) a subsection of Contra Costa Transit Authority, Clayton with a population of under 12,000 has the same voting power as Concord which is more than 10 times their size.

Another interesting, but unintended consequence is that there is a bias towards reappointing people to the same groups in small cities. Whereas large cities have higher turnaround in appointees as Council members are drawn to higher elected offices such as Supervisor, Assembly and Senator as in the case of Concord's record. This increased length of service in small city compounds their influence. As a result, the experience level of the small city appointees makes them more attractive for offices within the regional group.

The consequence is that long-serving representative from tiny cities tend to become leaders to something like the Association of Area Governments, ABAG, or can hold dominant positions in a transportation group even though the actual city does not even have a gas station, let alone a railroad, airport or seaport.

So, the next time you go to look at voting for City Councilmember, you may want to ask what have they done for you regionally or will do to you?

## I Wish There Was No Need for the Monument Crisis Center

by Dominic Aliano

I have had the pleasure of knowing the Monument Crisis Center in Concord from an early age, because it was the first organization that I volunteered at as a child. Today, I am on the Monument Crisis Center Board of Directors and it is an honor to continue to serve the Center, the Concord community, and the greater Contra Costa County area.

The Monument Crisis Center was founded in 2003 by a small group of concerned individuals. The founders started the Center with the intention of being a food pantry and served 84 families on the first day of food distribution. Since the opening in 2003, the Monument Crisis Center has continued to grow its client base by adding approximately 1,300 new families each year and reached more than 20,000 households that were registered by August 2017.

Today, the Monument Crisis Center is much more than a food pantry. The Center morphed from a food pantry to a family resource center because they recognized that their clientele needed more than food. The Monument Crisis Center is now a family resource center that provides food education, and referrals to individuals, families, children, and seniors in need. Services provided by the Center include:

- Employment opportunity workshops that help individuals in setting up an e-mail account, building a resume, and improving basic interview skills.
- Health and wellness resources which helps clients with application assistance for MediCal, Healthy Families, and CALFresh.
- Rotacare Bay Area Mobile which provides healthcare services to uninsured individuals.
- Nutrition and cooking education that teaches individuals how to cook healthy and affordable meals.

- Health screenings for diabetes, cholesterol and blood pressure checks.
- Dental screenings that include checks for cavities, gum disease, dry mouth, and oral cancer.
- After-school tutoring for children between the ages of 5 and 12. Providing a space for children in our community to receive homework assistance.
- The Center also serves as a teen center that provides a safe place for middle school students to interact with peers and college-age mentors.
- Backpack distribution for students at the beginning of the school year.
- Senior moments which is a program that provides seniors with groceries, a healthy lunch, time to socialize, blood pressure screenings, and a sense of community.

Overall, the Monument Crisis Center served 4,000 people in the last quarter. I wish there was no need for the Monument Crisis Center, but there is. The City of Concord and Contra Costa County are fortunate to have the Monument Crisis Center because they provide much-needed services. If you are ever interested in volunteer opportunities or would like to contribute monetarily to the Center, please contact them at 925-825-7751.



## computercorner

by William Claney, Computers USA

Tech in English

## Tech Gifts – Great, Now What?

By all accounts from stores across the nation, the gift giving season was a big success and Santa brought just the right tech present for you and your computer. You're excited because it will make computing fun, fast, and helpful again, only one problem – installing it.

Suppose that special someone gave you a new computer or a tech gift for your computer. Are you going to set it up, or install it yourself? Or, are you stumped and would rather not install or make it work yourself leaving you wondering why you wanted it in the first place?

Don't worry, the elves will still be around after the holiday season to help you get your tech working the way it should. Professional installation is usually the best way to insure the tech works properly. There are drivers, firmware updates, and software to install to make everything work right. Do I even mention opening the computer and working in the maze of wires and circuits. If you are a "techie" type of person, perhaps you can install it yourself. However, most of us are not that technically astute enough to pull it off.

If you were given a computer, keep in mind the Internet is a wild and crazy place and you will need protection.

The very first thing you should do is install cyber security to protect your data and provide security for passwords. The second thing you should do is establish your backup. Do these things before you get too deeply involved with moving data from your old computer to the new one. This will insure you have a safe and sane computing experience.

A professional installation is always a great option one should consider. Let's say you received a new trailer hitch for your car, would you install it yourself? Maybe, but most people will take the hitch to their auto mechanic and have them do it. Same

with computers and the peripherals that make it work. So, don't be shy, it's okay to admit you need help. After all, tech isn't exactly easy to understand and



really, you just want it to work.

A trick that works most of the time is to ask your tech to give you the Holiday special installation price. Usually tech shops have a great rapport with the customers they serve and are willing to give discounts on installation or setup in these situations, especially if you, or your benefactor, shopped at their store and purchased it there. Go ahead and ask them.

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## Resident Tales

# Thoughts of Life

by Bob Tellefsen, Age 87 and 2/3

Life is a lot like baseball and yacht racing.  
Fortunately, both take time to finish successfully.  
Getting to first base, and the weather mark, is the first thing important at the beginning.

Rounding second base, and the next mark, is an achievement that's possible only if there are few errors.

Getting to third base, and another mark, on life's course takes much scrutiny and focused concentration, in a world of compromise and uncertainty, to make this happen in the best planned way.

Rounding third base, and the last mark on the course, takes forethought and few mistakes, which must be corrected or risk becoming disastrous.

Finally, life, like baseball and yacht racing, take on new meanings as home plate, and the finish line, is just ahead; and realization sets in that this is what the culmination of a great game of life is all about, if played according to thoughtful and empathetic individuals.

And so, arriving safely at this time of life has been accomplished by stepping up to the plate, and knowing smart anchoring in this troubled tidal current, that is now part of daily existence.

In the end, touching home plate, crossing the finish line, sensing that all my awesome family is there with champagne glasses raised in an old Norwegian toast,

“Min skål, din skål, alla vackra flickors skål”!

Here's to my health, your health, and all the pretty girls' health!



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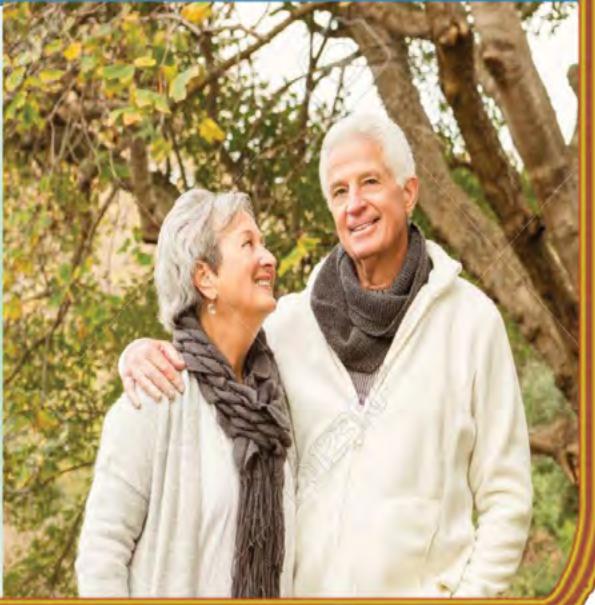
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# Best Sportsmanship Goes to Acalanes Girls Soccer Offers Care-Kits to Opponents' Needy

If there is one concern of every parent when entering their kids into youth sports, it is "what is the quality of the team's coach?" We all hope the coach offers a fun, positive experience that teaches sportsmanship, and encourages a budding athlete to develop.

At Acalanes High School Girls Varsity and JV soccer teams, we discovered two coaches that may be the best role-model of positive coaching.

Outside of the school season, Acalanes girls' soccer Head Coach Sasha Chalak along with his Assistant Coach Jubin Dana work together coaching club soccer for West Valley Vision Soccer Club in the South Bay. Coach Dana proposed to his 2006 (U12) girls' team a Care-Kit project in the Spring of 2017, that was designed to give the girls a greater life experience from their soccer activities. They wanted to promote social awareness and teach them simple deeds that anyone can undertake to help the community. The girls prepared several Care-Kits to give to their opposing team's captains at the start of each game with the request that they distribute them to someone of

need in their community. It was so well received, that it is something that they will do yearly in the club setting, according to Chalak.

"We decided to pass this service project along to the Acalanes Girls Soccer Program with the intent to raise awareness among our youth athletes; that learning the importance of service and philanthropy is just as important, IF NOT MORE important than the actual sport. If we are in a position to support, aide and give back to the less fortunate, then it is our obligation to do so," according to Chalak.

Both Acalanes

Varsity and JV Girls soccer teams are participating in the project this season.

Interestingly, this is not an official Acalanes High School project. The inspiration, execution, and responsibility of this learning experience rests solely on Coaches Chalak and Dana, as well as the enthusiastic cooperation of the players. In fact, the Acalanes administration may not even know about it. It would have gone virtually unnoticed if it weren't for an impressed center referee who witnessed the opening exchange of the Care-kits at



one of the games and alertly contacted Diablo Gazette.

The Care-Kits are made up of a plethora of items such as tissue pack, comb, soap, thermal blanket, socks, Granola Bars, hand lotion, lip balm, tooth paste, tooth brush, friendship bracelet, shampoo, and conditioner. The items were purchased in bulk off Amazon.com. In addition, each player was asked to write a letter on a 3x5 index card. Each Care-Kit also included one of the letters from the players. We allowed for the players to write a little something special that they

would want the receiver of this Care-Kit to read.

"The girls made 100 Care-kits in total. We had assembled enough kits to where every opponent that we play would receive two Care-Kits at the opening coin toss. Then the leftover kits were given to the Acalanes players to distribute on their own.

Our hat goes off to Coach Chalak and Coach Dana for going above and way beyond the coaching call-of-duty, What an outstanding initiative indeed.

## Dave Eary's Legacy: Remember, It's for the Kids

by Jill Hedgecock

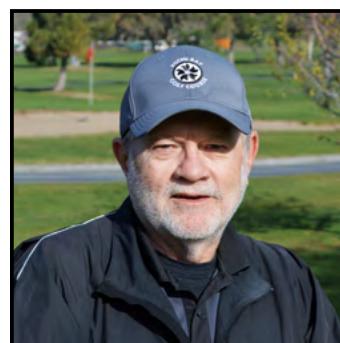
Baseball and softball may be considered spring sports, but the Pleasant Hill baseball and softball season kicks off on January 6th with evaluation day.

For Dave Eary, this annual announcement comes with a sense of accomplishment.

Back in the mid-1990s when he first moved to the East Bay with his five-year-old son and six-year-old daughter, the Pleasant Hill Baseball Association (PHBA) didn't include softball in the title. Although one third of the league was comprised of girls, they were given last choice for practice time and game fields. Female players weren't even provided baseball caps as part of their uniforms. Dave stepped in determined to make changes.

His leadership as a coach soon led to his role as a two-term head commissioner followed by two terms as president of PHBA, the largest independent baseball and softball league in Northern California at the time. During his presidency, he and his board of directors proposed that the PHBA be renamed the Pleasant Hill Baseball and Softball Association. He was instrumental in elevating the girls' softball program to an equal footing with boys' baseball in the areas of field scheduling, uniforms, and funding. He also endeavored to minimize costs so that kids of all economic backgrounds could play.

Besides advocating for the softball players, Dave Eary implemented improvements at many levels. He tackled one of the biggest challenges the league faced: finding practice and game fields for 105 different teams. Despite building a new field at Strandwood Elementary School with all volunteer labor, in the mid-1990s, there were still only 11 sports fields available to youth teams. So Eary and Greg Smith, the PHBA board member responsible for fields, spearheaded



"I never mastered it in over 11 years of coaching."

As an experienced coach, Eary was disheartened by the effect of negative comments on young athletes. Long before the idea of "positive coaching" was considered fashionable, he became an early champion of this now national program.

"For every negative comment," Eary says, "it takes four positive comments to counteract the blow to a child's self esteem."

Coaches can also behave badly with other adults. Once at a ten-year-old-girls' softball game, Eary was confronted by the losing coach who clearly wanted to punch him in the face. These experiences inspired him to institute a zero tolerance policy for disruptive behavior, such as improperly challenging the umpire during baseball games.

Eary's contributions to youth sports did not go unnoticed. He was given the Pleasant Hill Recreation and Park District's Community Service Award in 1996 and 1997 and received an award from the Pleasant Hill-Martinez AYSO.

Several PHBA youths did move on

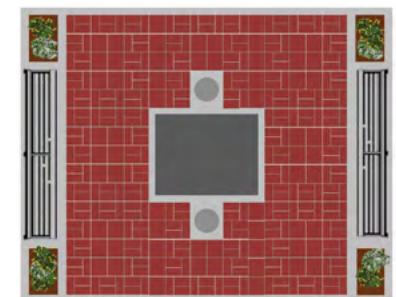


## Additional Bricks Available for Sesquicentennial Anniversary Todos Santos Plaza Patio

The 150th Celebration committee announced that an updated design for the Todos Santos Plaza entrance and bronze Don Salvio Pacheco statue has created an additional 225 bricks that can be sponsored for the surrounding patio.

Each brick will be engraved with the sponsor's name or sentiment. Individual bricks are \$150, while larger 12" x 12" paver tiles are \$1000. For more information or to become a sponsor, contact [concord150@concordhistorical.org](mailto:concord150@concordhistorical.org).

The statue of Don Salvio Pacheco will be unveiled at the July 4th, 2018.



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to play ball professionally. But Eary says what made it all worthwhile is the memory of the glow in a nine-year-old's eyes when he shook the child's hand at the end of a season and handed the youth a baseball.

These rewarding experiences, along with being a positive role model as coach, commissioner and president in PHBA, inspired his mantra: "Remember, it's for the kids."

Those interested in participating on a youth baseball (boys between 4 and

15 years) or softball (girls 4 to 18 years) PHBA team should register at <http://phba.org/Page.asp?n=124340&org=phba2>. Players new to the sport or after a one year absence must be evaluated. Evaluations will occur Saturday, January 6, 2018 at Pleasant Oaks Park fields between 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM. Bring a mitt and cleats, other equipment provided.

Photo by Eric Hedgecock

## Ruth Winder, Local Cyclist Continues Success on World Stage

Poor coaching at the highest level can adversely impact even the most dedicated of athletes. Look no further than the personal experience Ruth Winder, 24, an outstanding women's cyclist from Lafayette whose 2016 Olympic experience and career was detoured by questionable coaching.

Winder is considered to be the top ranked USA woman's cyclist having won the 2017 USA Pro Road Tour.

Winder and her family moved to California from England when she was six years old. Except in certain circles, she is basically unknown locally despite having grown up here her entire life... which is odd considering her 9 years of astonishing racing success.

Because she was home-schooled, she still speaks with a very distinguished accent. And her athleticism bypassed local prep notoriety. Winder has been on the national circuit for a long time. She began racing competitively at age 15 and within a year, she was winning events – big events.

- In 2009 1st in USA Cycling Junior Road National Championships, 15-16
- 2010 1st USA Cycling Junior Track National Championships, 17-18
- 2011 1st in USA Cycling Track National Championship, Women's Team Pursuit
- 1st in 2013 USA Cycling Elite Timed Track National Championships
- 2015 she won Silver in the Pan American Games, Team Pursuit
- 2016 Gold in the World Championship, Team Pursuit, a first for USA Women's cycling
- She was also a Silver medalist on the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, Team Pursuit
- 2017 she finished 4th in the World



European team. Road Race events can be from one to eight-day events, much different than track racing.

"I have a strong desire to be the best I can be. Because of that, I'm always pushing myself hard. My parents and family also give me a lot of motivation. I want to make them proud and do well as a thank you for everything they give me," Winder says.

Actually it makes all of us proud to be represented on the National and World stages by one of our own local citizens. So, will she return to the Olympics now that the Coach and his wife have left the team?

"For any athlete, of course you have to consider that..." she hesitates. "Yes, is the short answer, I don't know if it will be for Road or for Track, I

kind of have my foot in each discipline, but at some point, you have to commit fully to one discipline. You can't train for both. Right now, I am really enjoying the road racing side of things. So, I can see myself definitely doing it for Road Racing."

We certainly hope she does, and has a better experience with a new coach.



Tour first stage of the Amgen Women's Race.

Winder made the 2016 US Olympic team but was not chosen to ride in the gold medal race against her native country, Great Britain. A decision due to the friction between the coach and team. The problem mostly due to a coach being married to one of the riders. That created drama, adversity, and favoritism. Instead of rejoicing her Olympic experience, she left disappointed.

"After the last two years, I've noticed I've not thought about the future as much," Winder said. "I've just wanted to enjoy racing my bike and having a good time," Winder said. She has since moved from Colorado Springs, and switched cycling disciplines from track to Road racing. She will be moving to Holland for the next seven months to compete on the Sunweb Pro



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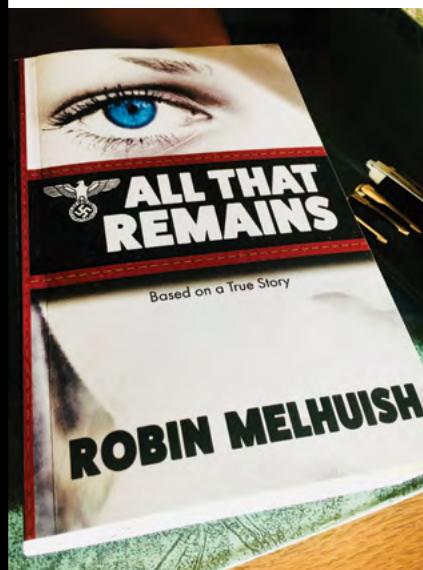
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## Trip to Charles M. Schulz Museum

By Celia Schwartz resident at The Heritage Downtown\*

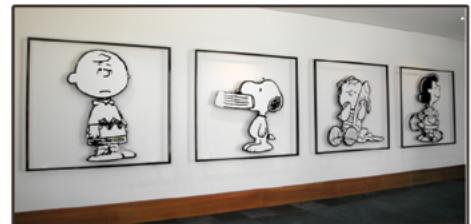
When our bus arrived at the Charles M. Schulz Museum, we were met by my son's dear friend Diana. Our driver, Laura, was glad to be there to lend a hand to all of us to make sure we were safe.

The grounds were delightful. There was Snoopy's doghouse. Hidden in the design of this doghouse you could see objects from "Peanuts" comic strips.

As we toured the museum, we learned that Charles Schulz was given the nickname Sparky by his uncle after the horse Spark Plug from the "Barney Google" comic strip. His love of comic strips was almost written in the stars. Throughout his youth, father and son shared a Sunday morning ritual reading the funnies. In his deepest desires, he always knew he wanted to be a cartoonist.

When he was a teenager, it was a proud moment for him when he saw his first cartoon of Spike, the family dog, published in the nationally syndicated "Ripley's Believe it or Not" newspaper.

With the encouragement of his mother, he completed a correspondence cartoon course as a senior in high school. Schulz continued taking art lessons and honed his artistic style from the late 1920's through the 1940's. The rest is history.



The first "Peanuts" strip appeared on October 2, 1950, in seven newspapers nationwide. Achieving his long-life dream, at 27 years old, he never could have foreseen the longevity and global impact of his seemingly simple four-panel creation.

We learned a lot about Schulz in the Biographical Gallery. Schulz also painted a wall for his daughter Meredith.

We enjoyed seeing the tile mural in the lobby of all the characters in the comic strip, such as Linus with his blanket, Lucy, Sally, Charlie Brown and Peppermint Patty and many others. A visit to Charles Schulz's Study was very interesting imagining him working on his drawings. In the Education Room, you can try drawing a cartoon.

On Sunday, February 13, 2000, newspaper readers opened their comic pages as they had for 50 years to read the latest adventures of Charlie Brown, Snoopy, and the rest of the "Peanuts" Gang. But mere hours before, Charles Schulz had passed away peacefully in his sleep. That Sunday was the final comic strip of "Peanuts" and the gang.

We had lunch in the Cafe adjacent to the Redwood Empire Ice Arena where we watched children ice skating. It was such a lovely day, we could have spent more time, but all good things must come to an end.

\*edited from "The Heritage Herald" December 2017



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