THE Rockridge News

www.rockridge.org

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CIRCULATION: 5,100 RESIDENCES; 200 BUSINESSES

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Forced Closures Poor Way To Fix Oakland Schools

School Board member Kerry Hamill says cuts should not rile parents and impact student achievement

by Cy Gulassa

Dr. Randolph Ward's plans to close a series of 13, then 11, then 5 of Oakland's schools to cut costs illustrates a problem with state-appointed administrators: They ride into town with good fiscal intentions, but often make unpopular decisions because they fail to consult with the community.

Ward is no exception. His first proposal, made during the holiday recess, was overkill and he had to backtrack, but not before angering parents and students and demoralizing the educational community.



Kerry Hamill, District One School Board member. FILE PHOTO

"I'm not opposed to consolidating or closing schools, but doing so unilaterally is not a productive way to fix things," District One school board member Kerry Hamill said in an interview with *The Rockridge News.*

Hamill said a major problem is that the state administrator has exclusive authority and is beholden only to Sacramento, so there's

▸ HAMILL, PAGE 13

KIRIN in the Year of The Monkey

Restaurant approved despite objections of residents

by Hiroko Kurihara, RCPC Board Member



A classic image of the Kirin. If you are pure of heart, good luck is coming your way.

GRAPHIC: ASAHI/KOIMARI/HIMI/SARA

The Kirin is a Japanese unicorn (from the Chinese Ki-Lin, a mythical animal that personifies all that is good, pure, and peaceful). A Kirin can punish the wicked with its single horn. It protects the just and grants them good luck. Seeing a Kirin is considered an omen of extreme good luck — if one is a virtuous person.

Well, virtuous residents of Rockridge, you will now have the opportunity to gain good luck because on January 21, the auspicious eve before the Chinese New Year, the Oakland Planning Commission approved the construction of the two-story Kirin restaurant at 5362 College Avenue, next to the Rockridge Library, where Crème de la Crème was located.

The RCPC Board and Land Use Com-

▸ KIRIN, PAGE 12

agenda: RCPC General Meeting

Thursday, February 19, 7:30 p.m.
Rockridge Branch Library
Community Room
5366 College Avenue at Manila

- **Forum: Oakland City Council At-large Candidates**
- **Overview of Propositions on March 2 Ballot**

RCPC will hold a candidates forum for the at-large seat on the Oakland City Council. Henry Chang, current Oakland City Council Member At-large, and contender Melanie Shelby will present their qualifications and answer questions from Rockridge residents on issues ranging from Oakland in general to

▸ RCPC AGENDA, PAGE 12

Get Into the Action in Rockridge!

RCPC seeks Board Candidates

by Deborah Weinstein, RCPC Vice Chair

If you would like to become more involved in your neighborhood, serving on the Rockridge Community Planning Council offers you the perfect opportunity. RCPC will hold its annual election in April for five Board Directors, each of whom serves a two year term. The Board consists of ten elected and one appointed director. Candidates must be 18 years of age, live within RCPC boundaries and indicate their intention to run for office by March 18. (A map and description of RCPC boundaries are available online at

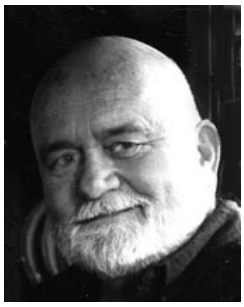
▸ RCPC BOARD, PAGE 10



The RCPC Board of Directors

Front row, left to right: **Jessica Pitt, co-Secretary; Dulcy Anderson; Susan Montauk.** ***Middle, l-r:*** **Hiroko Kurihara; Theresa Nelson; Jennifer Edmister; Deborah Weinstein, Vice Chair.** ***Rear, l-r:*** **Gregory Yoch, Treasurer; Mike Taylor; Dan Ferdleman, Chair; John Potis, co-Secretary.**

Editorial



■ Cy Gulassa

The Oakland School Board Reduced to a Greek Chorus

After a two year absence, I'm glad to be back as editor of *The Rockridge News*, recycled so to speak. Thanks to outgoing editor Jackie Tasch for her outstanding work and for making the transition so easy. Jackie as well as her predecessor Claire Isaacs will continue to write for the newsletter as their interests and time permit.

One of the first things I did as editor was to interview Oakland school board member Kerry Hamill to learn how Oakland's schools were doing (☛ see story, page 1) now that a state administrator is in charge. That's when I learned the full measure of the state's wrath in school takeovers. When a school district is in serious financial trouble and gets a loan from the state, the board is automatically stripped of all legal authority and reduced to advisory status, a powerless role.

The board's nemesis is the State Education Code, amended after the collapse of the Richmond District a decade ago. It provides that upon granting the loan, the state Superintendent assumes "all the legal rights, duties, and powers of the governing board" [Ed. Code: 41326 (b)], and appoints an administrator to act on his behalf. And get this: While serving as mere advisors, "no member of the governing board shall be paid or entitled to any stipend, benefits, or other compensation." [41326 (b)]

It's pure Greek tragedy. A twenty word incantation and an elected board quite magically is transformed from duly elected legal representatives to an unpaid Greek chorus chanting laments off stage, and its former superintendent is expelled like Oedipus to wander in the desert for being blind to the books.

The main reason for penalizing the board is the absurd assumption that they have primary responsibility for the health of the district budget. After serving as the head of a faculty collective bargaining unit for over 20 years, I can assure anyone willing to listen that no lay board has the time or expertise to understand well the arcane, convoluted and complex structure of school fund accounting, or effectively oversee the players. Lay boards are beholden to the green-eye-shade guys who massage data and print fat quarterly reports that are always part fact and part guess.

The irony is that while the lay board is defrocked, the state professionals hired to oversee school finance escape accountability altogether. For example, an emergency financial team (FCMAT) has been scouring Oakland's books for years, yet sounded only feeble alarms. Another example, the Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE), responsible for certifying the accuracy of all school budgets in the county, failed to expose in a timely manner the explosive mix of declining revenues and rising expenses that blew the multi-million dollar hole in the budget.

Page after page of last year's Alameda County Grand Jury final report lambastes the county office of education for failing to aggressively monitor the finances of a district that had "a history of serious financial trouble." The report reveals that a previous grand jury faulted Alameda County Superintendent of Education Sheila Jordan for not having intervened sooner in the financial collapse of Emeryville a few years ago. And it states that the county office is "considered to be in the bottom 25% of aggressiveness of COEs in the state." In other words, the Alameda County Office of Education earns a D-.

The Grand Jury report recognizes that a lay board's ability to oversee budgets is only marginal. It recommends that the board receive more training, demand better audits, and consider hiring a permanent independent auditor to validate data and improve accountability.

While the pros get a verbal no-no, the lay board is stripped of power, pay and prestige and ordered to seek help. By extension, even those of us who voted for the board are penalized: our democratically elected representatives are no longer empowered to collaborate with us or make decisions on our behalf.

It seems we too are members of the Greek chorus, singing doleful laments off the political stage.

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Weds, Thurs, Sat:	10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Friday	12 – 5:30 p.m.
Sunday, Monday	CLOSED

Library details: See Calendar, page 15.

The Rockridge News

The Rockridge News, founded in 1986 by Don Kinkead, is published monthly in Oakland and is sponsored by the Rockridge Community Planning Council, a non-profit public benefit organization founded to: preserve and enhance the unique character of the Rockridge neighborhood; promote the health, safety and quality of life of its residents; furnish a forum for community involvement, and provide leadership and representation of neighborhood interests.

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- Do you have questions about newsletter distribution?
- Would you like to volunteer to be a *Rockridge News* block captain?

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Publication date of the next issue is
☛ March 6, 2004
☛ March deadline is February 19

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Southern California Strikers Picket Rockridge Safeway

"It's all about bottom lines and health benefits," they say

by Cy Gulassa

If the big DON'T SHOP SAFEWAY banner doesn't stop you from trying to shop at Safeway's giant store on Pleasant Valley Avenue, a knot of pickets will try to convince you to turn around and go elsewhere. But the store is not on strike. What gives?

In Southern California, 70,000 Vons, Ralph's, and Albertson's workers have been on strike since October 11 over proposed massive cuts to health care, a freeze on wages, and a two-tier system that pays new hires less and slashes their benefits.

Northern California workers, however, have not only not walked out, their contract doesn't expire until September 11.

The five pickets, all carrying Don't Shop Safeway/Vons signs, are happy to explain. "The strategy is way simple," says picketer Ed Anderson, who has over 30 years of seniority at Albertson's in La Mirada, California, and seems to be the leader of the group. "The union sends strikers like me up north to picket giant stores, the ones with weekly sales in the millions. The goal is to spread the word about the strike down south and support our brothers and their families by hurting Safeway's bottom line. Profit is all the bosses understand. Safeway's Vons division already lost $500 million last quarter."

Christy Bultsma breaks in with details. "Local 324 of United Food and Commercial Workers Union pays us $300 per week plus benefits. They put us up in a local hotel and we work eight to ten hour shifts seven days a week talking to customers." Christy, a single mom with two teen-age boys, works part-time for Ralph's in Buena Park for $7.40 an hour. She's as lean as an aerobics instructor and her voice is hoarse from talking. "It's all about affordable health care. Safeway argues it's upping health care costs only $5 a week for singles and $15 for families. If that were true, we wouldn't be on strike. It's the caps [limits] they want to put on health benefits. Hey, my kid broke his arm and had to have surgery last year. If the caps had been in place, I'd be out of pocket eleven thousand."

"We're having an effect," says Beverley Hamilton, a third member of the quintet who works in Riverside. She points her sign to a scatter of empty parking spaces in the store lot, which is usually jammed. "A lot of the customers are workers just like us and stay away when they hear what's happening to us down south."



From left, Johann Baqueiro, Christy Bultsma, Nasrin Rahgozaar, Ed Anderson, Beverley Hamilton. All are strikers from Southern California.

"Contrary to what they say, we don't make big bucks," Anderson says, interrupting with the big voice and animation of a sportscaster. "The average worker makes about $20,000. That's barely enough to get by. You know, instead of raises for the last couple years, we pumped money into health care and now they want to cut that, too."

He introduces fellow striker Johann Baqueiro, a burly young man wearing a UFCW tee shirt and a black cap pulled low over his ears. Johann says he's been working at Ralphs in Lakewood for eight years and makes around $18,000. Urged by the others, he tells a personal story: "My wife is disabled and we just lost our house last month. Couldn't make payments while we're on strike."

While the four pickets take turns telling employment stories, like managers shifting all meat cutting to central distribution centers to eliminate in-store cutters, the fifth picket, Nasrin Rahgozaar, stays on the job, talking to customers and handing out copies of a fiery letter from Congressman Tom Lantos to Safeway CEO Steve Burd.

The letter zeroes in on the benefits controversy, accusing Mr. Burd of apparently "lying to workers, consumers and the public." Lantos asserts that even with the $5 and $15 weekly co-pays for workers, in three years the current health care program would be $679 million short and would require either future cuts in care or increases in co-pay. He tells Burd, "The bottom line is that 70,000 jobs that now come with affordable, family health coverage will not come with that coverage in the future."

Inside the store, Safeway manager David Green emerges from a tiny office to emphatically refuse comment on the impact of the pickets on sales. "Contact Safeway's public affairs director," he says, not bothering to hide his annoyance. Unfortunately, the answering machine says the director is out of town.

Local Contract Expires in September

Federal mediator John Arnold is working to resolve the dispute that began with a strike against Vons (Safeway) last October 11 in San Diego. Two other supermarket chains in the UFCW bargaining unit, Ralphs (Kroger) and Albertson's, immediately locked out their employees, involving a total of 70,000 clerks and cashiers. The United Food and Commercial Workers contract governing our local Safeway workers expires in September.

Real Estate In Rockridge

Another year, another ten percent — almost

by Ortrun Niesar

As we wrap up our reports for the year 2003, we are once again astounded by the enormous popularity of real estate in Rockridge. Compared with 2002, our homes, already listed at prices reflecting a surging market, still sold substantially over asking price. In fact, 2003 was our best year ever! The 121 single-family homes sold in Rockridge (include Claremont Pines in this calculation) exceeded 2002 only slightly, but the overall increase in sales prices was 9.99% over last year. Let's say 10%.

Changing Demographics

The shocker is that single-family homes priced at $500,000 and under have finally become a thing of the past, following the trend in comparable neighborhoods in Berkeley. In 2003 six homes were in that category, two of them one-bedroom cottages, versus 17 homes in 2002. In fact, in 2003 the median price of a typical two-bedroom bungalow was $580,000. This, no doubt, is prompting a change in demographics that warrants awareness. The overall average sold price was $847,637, with a median of $750,000. Compare this to $770,604 and $691,500 respectively in 2002. Further, 75% of homes that sold at $650,000 or less exceeded the asking price. By the same token, of the 26 homes sold at $1,000,000 or more, 75% sold at a price somewhat lower than asking, suggesting there's a limit after all. Even so, this is another record for Rockridge and Claremont Pines.

How Did We Do It

These record sales can be attributed to the continuing demand for single-family homes in Rockridge coupled with the availability of favorable financing terms and low mortgage rates. Other factors include the short inventory, excellent maintenance, tasteful renovation and meticulous preparation of homes for market.

Outlook for 2004

As we launch into 2004, buyer demand has not abated. Just last week we saw 32 inquiries for a property on Keith. Every desirable residence brings out hordes of

Real Estate: Rockridge, page 6

RCPC Land Use Committee Seeks Guidelines for Rockridge Signs

Garish sign proposal for gas station prompts resident's concerns

Spurred by concerns of residents about recent commercial signs and design proposals, the RCPC Land Use Committee has begun to develop guidelines and will work jointly with the local merchant's Rockridge District Association and residents.

The need for regulations was prompted by a Shell Oil proposal to install new signs and lights at its College and Claremont station that seem more appropriate for a freeway off-ramp than a quiet residential district. Members of the Land Use Committee have already met with Shell representatives and are making some progress appealing for modifications that soften the impact. Both the committee and association want signage and related commercial structures to be tasteful and consistent with the neighborhood character. Big signs, bright lights and brash designs are not in keeping with local standards.

The committee and association want signage and related commercial structures to be tasteful and consistent with the neighborhood character.... The purpose of signs... is to identify a business and attract customers without converting College Avenue into a strip mall

To study the issues in greater detail and develop in six months a long-term comprehensive plan, RCPC is creating a special task force and urges everyone interested to join. The mission is to set reasonable guidelines governing small College Avenue projects as well as to establish a process for fair and timely review. The purpose of signs, banners, monuments and the like is to identify a business and attract customers without converting College Avenue into a strip mall. The task force will attempt to reconcile competing interests.

If you have opinions about signs and aesthetic standards, this Commercial Design Task Force is for you. The goal is to complete work within six months. Please contact Land Use Committee Co-Chair Hiroko Kurihara who is organizing the task force: h2oakland@sbcglobal.net or 384-0557.

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ZONING COUNTER

5321 Manila Avenue

Proposal: To constuct an approximately 1,200 square-foot upper floor addition to an existing single family dwelling.

Owner/Applicant: Michael Kremer 420-7022

Planning Permits Required: Mediated Design Review for a 1,200 square-foot upper floor addition

Case Planner: Maurice Brenyah-Addow at 238-6342 or mbrenyah@oaklandnet.com

5489 Taft Avenue

Proposal: To construct a new 269 square foot upper level addition to the rear of an existing single family dwelling

Owner/Applicant: Whitney Collins 510/595-4094

Planning Permits Required: Minor Variance to allow a 4-foot side yard setback where 5 feet minimum is required and Regular Residential Design Review for residential alterations

Historic Status: Potential Designated Historic Property (PDHP);

Survey rating C2+

Case Planner: Maurice Brenyah-Addow at 238-6342 or mbrenyah@oaklandnet.com

5755 Broadway

Proposal: To make design modifications to an existing service station including a reface of an existing free-standing sign.

Applicant: Ron Dultamel, Arc Inc

Contact Person/Phone Number: Ron Dultamel 707/745-0502

Owner: Shell Oil Products

Planning Permits Required: Regular Design Review for exterior modification in the S-4 Zone

Case Planner: Leigh McCullen at 238-4977 or lmccullen@oaklandnet.com

Golden Gate Avenue

(APN 048A-7200-006-00; vacant lot located approximately 200' south of the intersection of Broadway)

Proposal: To construct a new 2,461 sq. ft. single-family dwelling.

Applicant/Phone Number: Robert Nebolon 510/525-2725

Owner: Marcie Bodeaux & Dodie Shoemaker

Planning Permits Required: Regular Design Review to construct a new residential facility; Minor Variance to allow a building length of 37.5' where 35' is the maximum allowed; Minor Variance to allow a 17' rear yard setback where 20' is the minimum required.

Case Planner: Darin Ranelletti at 238-3663 or dranelletti@oaklandnet.com

5133 Coronado Ave

Proposal: To construct a second-story addition at an existing single family dwelling.

Applicant: Andus Brandt

Contact Person/Phone Number: Andus Brandt 510/601-1150

Owner: Roberta and William Birdsong

Planning Permits Required: Design Review for a residential addition,

Minor Variance to allow a 4' building setback where 5' is required.

Case Planner: Ann Clevenger at 238-6980 or aclevenger@oaklandnet.com

6444 Benvenue Avenue

Proposal: To add a 1,465 square foot two story addition to the existing single-family residence for a total of 3,819 square feet.

Applicant: Bethany Opalach/ Jarvis Architects

Contact Person/Phone Number: Bethany Opalach/ Jarvis Architects 654-6755

Owner: Anne Schreiner & Steve Etter

Planning Permits Required: Regular Design Review for Dwelling

exceeding 3,500 square feet.

Historic Status: Potential Designated Historic Property (PDHP);

Survey rating D1+

Case Planner: Pete Vollman at 238-6167 or pvollman@oaklandnet.com

6451 Benvenue Avenue

Proposal: To convert an existing four residential apartment units into four residential condominium units. (The previous planning approval TPM 7428 has expired)

Applicant: Anthony G. Wilson

Contact Person/Phone Number: Anthony G. Wilson 654-9311

Planning Permits Required: Tentative Parcel Map to convert an existing four residential apartment units into four condominium units.

Historic Status: Potential Designated Historic Property (PDHP);

Survey rating C1+

Case Planner: Jason Madani at 238-4790 or jsmadani@oaklandnet.com

Case Planner: Darin Ranelletti at 238-3663 or dranelletti@oaklandnet.com



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Bring Your Valentine to the Temescal Creek Clean-up

Saturday, February 14, 9 'till noon



Join with neighbors in a volunteer effort to clean up litter and weeds along Temescal Creek from Redondo to Clifton.

We meet at 9 a.m. next to Temescal Creek in the DMV parking lot (at Claremont and Cavour) and work until noon. Coffee and morning snacks will be provided by the DMV Neighbors Association.

City of Oakland Public Works Environmental Services Division will loan us tools for the clean-up. In addition to gloves and garbage bags, it will supply loppers, rakes, hoes, brooms, and litter pickup sticks. Or bring your own favorite tools, well-marked with your name. We can always use wheelbarrows. The Temescal Tool Lending Library has a great weed puller for really big weeds. We'll check out several and give demonstrations. By Valentine's Day there should be lots of big green weeds to pull. We need to get rid of them before they get out of control.

Wear boots or shoes that you don't mind getting wet since it's very likely that the creek will be running and the area muddy. Rain cancels the event but not heavy fog. Some of our best winter clean-ups have been on gray days.

Sponsored by the DMV Neighbors Association and the City of Oakland Environmental Services Division.

For more information, please call Margaret Pinter, 655-1767.

January Crime Report: Rockridge

For the period January 4 – 10, 2004

Prepared by Jessica Edmister, RCPC Board Member

Parts of Rockridge are located in police beats 12Y and 13X. A link to the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) on the RCPC web site (www.rockridge.org) has a map showing the areas covered by those beats. The City of Oakland web site offers extensive current and historic crime data. Visit http://www.oaklandnet.com.

Beat 12Y			
Date	**Crime**	**Time of Day**	**Address/Area**
01/04/04	Auto Burglary	Evening	5366 College Ave.
01/05/04	Auto Burglary	Day	Redondo Ave./Cavour .
01/06/04	Auto Theft	Early A.M.	5825 Colby St.
01/06/04	Petty Theft	Day	5727 College Ave.
01/06/04	Attempted Robbery	Evening	400 Avon St.
01/08/04	Auto Burglary		400 block Clifton St.
01/08/04	Residential Burglary		377 60th St.
01/08/04	Residential Burglary	Day	5334 Miles Ave.
01/10/04	Grand Theft	Afternoon	5103 Broadway

Beat 13X			
Date	**Crime**	**Time of Day**	**Address/Area**
01/05/04	Auto Burglary	Day	5405 Carlton St.
01/06/04	Auto Theft	Early A.M.	59 Bowling Dr.
01/09/04	Commercial Burglary	Early A.M.	5300 Broadway
01/09/04	Petty Theft		5883 Buena Vista Ave.

Real Estate: Rockridge

from page 4

potential buyers. The fact is that, as long as our slow- to-grow economy demands it, financing policies will favor the real estate market. Expectations are that the Fed will stay the course until at least May or June. Inventory right now is at a record low, just at a time when the market is poised to become very active. Most sales occur in the spring months. Summer markets traditionally produce strong sales statistics for the month of September. Rockridge homeowners who want to sell will do very well indeed, although the surge in value may be less dramatic.

Ortrun Niesar writes *The Rockridge Muse* and is a Realtor with Prudential California, Claremont office. Statistics supplied by EBRD 2004 are deemed reliable but not guaranteed.

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Automobile Break-Ins Dominate Chatter on NCPC Yahoo Group; Backyard Thefts Also Noted

by Susan Montauk, NCPC member

Some residential areas of Rockridge were hit by a spate of car break-ins and auto-thefts in the last few months of 2003, according to reports on the Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Network Yahoo Group. These incidents occurred primarily (but not exclusively) in a group of blocks around Ross, Rockwell, and Chabot. In early January, just north of Claremont Avenue, between Colby and Claremont, backyard thefts and attempted break-ins were reported.

The Rockridge Neighborhood Watch Network was created as a Yahoo group in July, 2003. It is a project of the Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council, one of many Oakland crime prevention groups which work directly with the Oakland Police Department. Yahoo groups have popped up all over Oakland in the last year and are being used for various purposes. The Rockridge group is a crime watch group which takes its cues from the very successful OPD Yahoo group created and monitored by North Oakland Police Lieutenant Lawrence Green. Although there is no data to suggest that the network has aided in the suppression of crime, it has helped neighbors know just what to look out for, and often provides support and sound advice from other Rockridge residents.

The website group had a membership of 82 in early January and new members join each month. It is open to anyone within the greater Rockridge area. To join, follow this procedure: Go to www.yahoogroups.com. In the box labeled Join a Group, type in Rockridge Neighborhood Watch Network.

After joining the network, new members will be able to read all of the over 300 messages that have been posted since the group began.

The 1,2,3s of Crime Prevention*

Preventing Auto Burglaries

1. Leave your glove box open and empty at night. Potential theives will see that it is empty and hopefully not break in;
2. Remove your glove box light bulb (to prevent your battery from running down while the glove box is open);
3. Do not leave your garage door remote in your vehicle. A thief can break into the car and use the remote to get into your house (most people don't have a dead bolt on the entry door from the garage to inside the home.)
4. Install a dead bolt on the entry door in the garage!
5. Hide your vehicle registration in your car. If you are out shopping and a thief steals your car and finds the registration with your address on it, he can drive to your house, open the garage with the remote and spend the next few minutes taking your belongings.

Avoiding Residential Burglaries

1. If you own a gun, lock it up in a good gun safe. Also, record make, model and serial number.
2. When you are gone for the day, leave a radio or TV on in the house.
3. Report any suspicious vehicles or people in your neighborhood. Get a license plate number if you can.

Dealing With Aggressive Panhandlers

1. Take a photograph of him if you can. Yes, this is legal.
2. A digital photo is easiest to post on Internet.
3. Alert your neighbors.

New Year's Resolutions

1. Buy a locking mailbox! Identity theft will ruin your year!
2. Make sure that your house numbers are visible from the street.

*Courtesy of OPD Yahoo Groups

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Sat 9:30 - 5:00
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Recent Closings and Market Statistics

Recent Closings:

Address	Bd/Ba	List Pr	Selling Pr	COE	%List
5343 Broadway Tr.	1/1	$249,000	$322,000	12/30/03	129%
5303 Lawton	4+/2	$819,000	$925,000	1/07/04	113%
5533 Broadway	2/1	$550,000	$625,000	1/21/04	114%

There was a 5% increase in the average home sales price in Rockridge
Average Sales Price: $645,000 in 2003 ***vs*** $603,700 in 2002
Average Price per Square Foot: $367/SF in 2003 ***vs*** $358/SF in 2002

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Measure Q Funding for Oakland Libraries on the March Ballot

The budget crisis in California affects our libraries. The City of Oakland anticipates a $1.1M shortfall in the library budget during fiscal year 2004-05 when Measure O, the Library Services Retention and Enhancement Act of 1994 expires. A coalition of neighborhood and library groups as well as City Councilmembers Jane Brunner and Nancy Nadel have drafted Measure Q, which for a 15 year period (until 2024) would extend the life of the original Measure O and increase funding for library services.

What would Measure Q fund?

- Staff to keep the Main Library open 7 days per week
- Staff to keep neighborhood branches (including our Rockridge Branch) open 6 days per week
- A Children's Librarian in every branch
- More books and materials in every branch
- Staff to operate the African American Museum and Library
- Literacy staff for the Second Start program (adult literacy)
- A full-time liaison with Oakland public schools
- Support for the PASS program (after school homework tutoring program)
- Support for the Teen Services Program
- An upgrade of computers in all libraries
- Funding for the 81st Avenue branch library

Measure Q funding would also increase from 5 to 6 the number of days per week the Rockridge Branch is open.

The cost per single family residential property in Oakland would be $6.25 per month or $75 per year. Multiple dwellings and commercial properties would pay proportionately higher fees.



To assure proper accounting of Meaasure Q proceeds, The City Council would appoint an oversight committee to monitor and make recommendations on expenditures, and the City Auditor would perform an annual audit.

For additional information: Get Measure Q fact sheets from the Rockridge Branch Library.

Check details at saveoaklandlibrary.org or fopl.org (Friends of the Oakland Public Library).

Contact Sue Piper, campaign coordinator, at 228-6079 or sgpiper@sbcglobal.net.

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Introducing "a bloody good read..."
Wine, Dine and Death Down Under
by Colby Derek James

Wine, Dine and Death Down Under is a suspenseful yarn involving murder, sex, and intrigue, set against an exotic Australian backdrop. The hero is a "take no prisoners" cloak and dagger type, who, in tracking the killer, must constatnly cope with racial tensions as a result of his mixed ancestry."
— Ed Flattau, Global Horizons Press

Wine, Dine and Death Down Under is a cunningly crafted story of intrigue that straddles cultures, countries and cuisines… this book is a bloody good read!
— Professer Kelvin Willoughby, Australian Fulbright Scholar

Colby Derek James in ***Wine, Dine and Death Down Under*** takes the reader on an exciting international adventure involving a mysterious murder in the Australian Outback, and introduces a Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century.
— Chet Lake


Colby Derek James

"...a Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century."

City Offers 'Clean City' Academy

Navigating the City's bureaucracy when you have a problem

by Jessica Pitt, RCPC Board Member

Have you ever tried to address a problem in the neighborhood and gotten frustrated trying to navigate through the City's bureaucracy? The City of Oakland recently introduced a new program, called the Clean City Academy, to orient Oakland residents to how City departments are organized and to advise them on the best way to deal with a range of neighborhood nuisances. At the January RCPC General Meeting, Jocelyn Combs from the City's Building Services Division presented the Clean City Academy for Rockridge residents.

The Clean City Academy grew out of a recognition on the part of City administrators that many neighborhood problems—such as abandoned cars, litter, noise nuisance—can cross departmental jurisdictions, yet little coordination existed among departments. As a result, Oakland residents were often shuffled back and forth between departments before they could get their complaints addressed. One way that the City has tried to address this problem is by providing better information about where to go when specific issues arise.

Combs shared two particularly valuable resources with the group. If you have a problem or complaint, you can call the Oaklanders' Assistance Center at 444-CITY (444-2489) or visit their office which is located in Room 123 on the first floor of City Hall. An information specialist will fill out a complaint form for you and route it to the appropriate departments.

Residents can also go the Oakland Shines web page on the City's web site at http://www.oaklandnet.com/oakshines to submit an electronic complaint form. The Oakland Shines web site also has an extensive list of helpful phone numbers and provides information on where to direct calls about specific issues such as automobiles and vehicles, noise complaints, police and crime, streets and sewers, and trash and blight.

At the meeting, Rockridge residents had an opportunity to raise specific concerns and problems. These included abandoned cars, dangerous sidewalks, tree removal, and vacant lots.

Combs described the City ordinances which address each of these issues, and provided advice to residents on which departments they should contact to get them addressed.

In Memoriam
Jeanette Sherwin

John Donne told his parishioners in 1623, "Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee." Indeed, the death of Oakland journalist Jeannette Sherwin on January 18 does diminish us all. She was a vital and intelligent woman with a great abundance of energy, humor, compassion and unbridled affection for politics, the City of Oakland, its people, gardens, nine cats, and most anybody who needed help.

But she had dragon-fire wrath for all the corruption and stupidity that she saw in Washington and Sacramento, and especially in Oakland's City Hall and vast and bumbling bureaucracy. Although not everyone agreed with her opinions and style, she ceaselessly excoriated political scoundrels, spurred on by a passion for truth and a chorus of admiring supporters.

Fired by *The Montclarion* for being too outspoken, she started OaklandNews.com in 1998, a perfect launch pad for her barbed revelations and witty views. Like other writers, *The Rockridge News* editors found Sherwin to be an excellent source of information and a fearless ally at public meetings.

Sherwin, along with Montclair resident Daphne Markham and *Rockridge News* founder Don Kinkead, organized The Neighborhood Newsletter Task Force, a city-wide forum for newsletter editors. It was there that she brought together the best and taught them by example. We will miss Jeannette, her work, her integrity, her friendship.

A memorial will be held Sunday, February 8, 2-3:30p.m.
at the Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club,
1650 Mountain Boulevard.

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Revelers Clash Swords on Harwood

by Cy Gulassa

It's one thing to have a great passion, quite another to share it with Rockridge neighbors. That's what Harwood Avenue residents David and Sharon Green did on a misty night last January. Summoned by the Green's flyers tucked under doormats, neighbors collected on walks at the intersection of Harwood and Auburn to watch under amber street lights a group of revelers called the Ring of Cold Steel dance a traditional English longsword dance.

Dressed in green tunics and black stomping boots, and accompanied by accordian, flute and drum, the dancers waved, crossed, and shouldered their longswords with disregard for their sharpness, and in a grand finale, interwove them into the shape of a star. In olden times, a village villain was forced to thrust his head into the center of the star as the slicing swords converged on his neck. For some dark reason, this writer was chosen villain, but was greatly relieved at the last horrific moment to note that the weapons were wooden.



Country dance experts David & Sharon Green remodeled their home to include a room for dance rehearsals.

According to the Greens, who are experts on country dance and have remodeled their home at 6130 Harwood to include a great room for dance rehearsals, the Harwood event commemorates Plough Monday, the Monday after Twelfth Night and the day before peasants resumed work in the fields. It was the last day of roistering, wassailing and dancing in the traditional English holiday season. One "trick-or-treat" version of festivities involved villagers in disguise, including blackface and cross-dressing, going from house to house dragging a plow and dancing for handouts, with a threat of plowing up the yard if treats weren't good enough. Contributions to the Ring dancers that night must have been generous because there were no reports of upturned lawns on either Harwood or Auburn.



Ring of Cold Steel dancers.
Back row, L to R: **Anne Miller, Joshua Lee, Kelly Kingdon, Robert Riley, Marion Severy.**
Front Row, L to R: **Anise Feldman, Johnny Seal, Jocelyn Cozzo**

PHOTO : ROCKRIDGE NEWS

RCPC Board

from page 1

www.rockridge.org.)

Since 1986, RCPC, a 501(c)3 corporation, has been representing Rockridge to the City of Oakland on issues that affect the Rockridge Community. RCPC acts as a community steward on a variety of issues. RCPC's work in the community includes: monitoring and participating in commercial design review for major projects in the neighborhood; serving as a liaison between the community and the Oakland Planning Commission; developing strategies to address issues of public and pedestrian safety, crime and traffic; working to strengthen our schools and educational resources; and serving as the primary vehicle for neighborhood communication with the publication of *The Rockridge News.*

Candidates for the RCPC Board are invited to submit a photo and a statement of about 125 words describing their interest in running for the Board. Statements must be received by March 18 for publication in the April issue of *The Rockridge News.* Please include your address and phone number in your mailing. Mail hard-copy statements with photos to RCPC, 5245 College Ave, PMB 311, Oakland, CA, 94618. Electronic copies, statements and photos can be sent via e-mail to deborahlweinstein@yahoo.com.

Candidates will speak, and voting will take place at the April 15 RCPC General Meeting at the Rockridge Library, 7:30 PM. For further information, call the RCPC voicemail at 644-4228.

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February Musical Notes

This month's Muse brings information about several of the many musical offerings in and around our neighborhood. If you would like to let readers know about your favorite event, please tell me about it. Here is this month's selection, ranging from intimate to grand.

Margret Elson's Soiree

A flute concert featuring Susan Waller and Joellen Piskitel, two artists well known to Bay Area music lovers, will take place on Saturday, February 7, at the home of Margret Elson and Michael Schwab. Call 601-7044 or e-mail Margret at margret13E@cs.com if you would like to attend. Space is limited. You will be asked to bring something for the desert reception that follows.

Florio Street Concerts

Another great neighborhood treat: KATastroPHE presents *On Wings of Song*, a romantic afternoon in a 19th century salon with Mendelssohn, Dvorak, Schubert and others, Sunday, February 22. Contact Katherine Westine at 601-9631. There is a charge but so well worth it. Tea and pastry reception follows.

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The Rockridge Muse

by Ortrun Niesar

Valentine's Day Cabaret

February 14, of course, from 7p.m. to 11p.m. It's a delightful benefit for the Julia Morgan Center for the Arts, and it's all about love, love, love: true love, erotic love, love gone bad, love just gone and more of the same. Lovers and friends of all kinds, and singles, too, are invited to join in on an evening of wonderful cabaret, presented by the Shotgun players, with chocolate and champagne to celebrate that certain feeling. Dancing until 11 after the performance. Ah, the romance of it all. Tickets at the door or through CBON Ticket line 925/798-1300.

The Legend of the Ring

The Berkeley Opera will present the American premiere of *The Legend of the Ring*, a condensed version of Wagner's monumental Ring cycle, in ONE evening at the Julia Morgan Theater. We are promised that this performance, orchestrated by David Seaman and staged by Mark Streshinsky, is compelling musical theater that captures all of the richness and drama of the original. And you thought it couldn't be done. March 6, 10, 12 and 14. Call 925/798-1300 for tickets or go to www.juliamorgan.org. for information.

Verdi's Requiem

This one is Big! It will be sung by several hundred members of the Berkeley Community Chorus and accompanied by a 48-piece orchestra. At one point you will certainly be blasted out of your seat by the sound of the trumpets, as fire and the wrath of God descend upon you. Rehearsals have already started but you can still join in if you enjoy making music. The performance is scheduled for May in St John the Worker Church in Berkeley. Call 964-0665 for more information.

Pacific Sangerbund

Not quite as lofty but pretty loud. If you like to sing and you know a little German you can join in the fun of learning and performing popular choral music primarily in German and English. The Pacific Singing Societies have been holding forth for 99 years now in the Bay Area and beyond, performing frequently in some very interesting places. Members hail from all over and age is of no consequence as long as you can carry a tune. The Oakland Turnverein Mixed Chorus meets Wednesday evenings for rehearsal. Call 652-6664 for more information.

Ortrun Niesar can be reached at oniear@aol.com. or 986-9560.

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Kirin

from page 1

mittee presented our opposition to the project because we heard your concerns, read your comments sent by e-mail or left at the library, and received a petition from residents on Manila Avenue. People felt that we didn't need another restaurant that seated 130-150 people, which would exacerbate parking and traffic problems, especially at this location. Another critical issue raised was how the new restaurant would affect the usability of our library. Other concerns included design, noise levels, odors, and commercial delivery.

But the most pertinent issue in the foreseeable future is parking. In this case, the restaurant will be 2,950 sq. ft., 50 sq. ft. short of 3,000 which would have required the developer to provide 10 parking spaces. Unfortunately, neither the developer nor the City made a good faith effort to address the parking and traffic issues, nor did they seek any alternative solutions.

To end on a positive note: The commission limited seating to 100 and requested a commitment from Deputy Director of Planning Gary Patton to work with residents and business owners on parking. Commissioners Lighty and Franklin were also interested in our concern about too many restaurants in Rockridge. Since it is a problem that affects all of Oakland, the planning commission is the appropriate body to decide what constitutes a proper mix of businesses.



Architect's drawing of proposed Kirin restaurant. With a design size of 2,950 square feet, the developer avoids having to provide 10 parking spaces. The City Planning Commission limited seating to 100 patrons.
GRAPHIC COURTESY OF PROJECT ARCHITECTS.

Let's hope that the Chu Family will merit the good luck that their restaurant's namesake offers. The Year of the irrepressible Monkey is a year for movement, discussion and the exchange of ideas. A parking and traffic task force will form to make sure the issues are resolved.

Anyone interested in these issues or participating in the task force, please contact Hiroko Kurihara at h2oakland@sbcglobal.net or 384-0557.

RCPC Agenda

from page 1

Rockridge in particular. Either submit questions in advance to Dulcy Anderson at dulcya@yahoo.com or bring them with you to the forum.

The League of Women Voters will also present an overview of the propositions that will be on the ballot for March 2. Please join us! We look forward to lively discussion of the issues that are important to our community.

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Hamill

from page 1

little incentive to work with local leaders to identify and fix problems. She says school board members like her, who represent the public and have an obligation to guide the superintendent, are made powerless by law. "We are automatically stripped of authority, our stipends are cancelled, we lose secretarial help, and even our school phones are disconnected," she said. If she makes a call with her own quarter, the state administrator is not obligated to call back. With the Board neutralized, parents, teachers and community are effectively disenfranchised. Anyone can speak at public meetings, but the state administrator doesn't have to listen.

Hamill said an autocratic style doesn't work well in school systems like OUSD, where hundreds of teachers and thousands of students and parents have been working together over the last three years to boost academics and inspire confidence in the educational process.

She argues that Ward should consult with the community before closing schools and pay as much attention to morale and academics as he does to dollars. When the trend is toward smaller neighborhood schools with strong parent involvement and emphasis on academic success, Dr. Ward may be moving in the wrong direction, she said. Further, budget woes and draconian remedies make headlines that upstage the district's remarkable turnaround in student achievement. Bad press drives families away, worsening an already dangerous enrollment decline and diminishing the expected financial savings, she wrote in a memo to parents.

Hamill prepared a statistical snapshot of seven of the North/West Oakland schools originally facing consolidation or closure to demonstrate enrollment drops, administrative overhead and a "significant increase in test scores." Longfellow and Foster still face closure.

Hamill says what's most impressive is the average 23% gain in test scores for the seven schools. Former Superintendent Dennis Chaconas was so intent on classroom improvements that he neglected to oversee the books and was fired, Hamill said. "But to his credit, he knew how to take a demoralized, academically inferior district and turn it around, making morale soar and creating real excitement and hope The district can't afford to forfeit this legacy. Through dialogue and thoughtful compromise, we can balance the budget and still nurture academic success. Working together is key."

Dr. Ward recently said that he dropped six schools slated for closure because they have shown significant academic progress.

The district has lost over 7,000 students to charter schools, a declining birth rate, and families leaving because of the high cost of housing. OUSD owes the state $65M of a $100M like of credit and expects a shortfall this year of $9M.

	Enrollment			API Scores		Aca-	Admin
	1998	Current	2004	2000	2003	Gain	Cost
Emerson	416	288	270	484	620	28%	$238,213
Foster	399	268	246	NA	515		$304,370
Golden Gate	360	217	217	445	613	38%	$257,080
Longfellow	407	182	180	487	589	21%	$251,311
Santa Fe	374	300	271	595	649	9%	$213,477
Washington	331	185	160	512	657	28%	$260,322
Carter	426	362	340	456	526	15%	$552,357
Totals	***2713***	***1802***	***1684***	***2979***	***3654***	***23%***	***$2,077,130***

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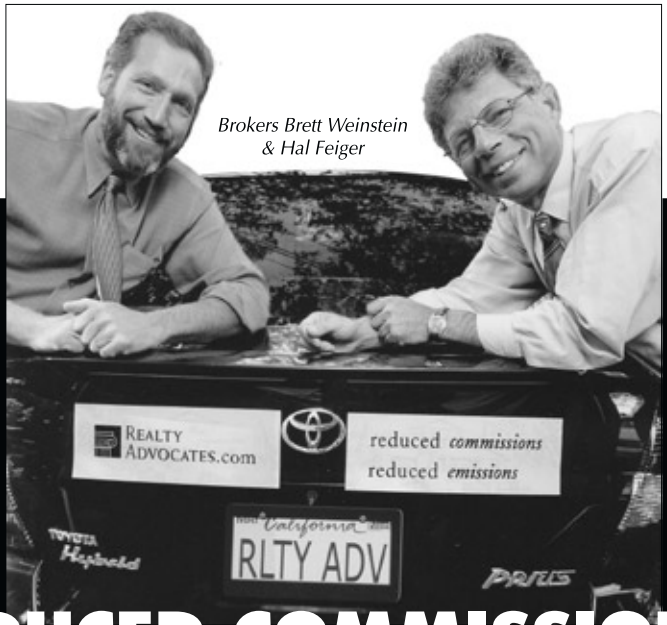
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Compiled by Jo Ellis

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

E-mail Rockridge News Community Calendar items to: joellis1@hotmail.com, phone 653-3210, or mail to: Rockridge News Community Calendar, 5245 College Avenue, PMB 311, Oakland, CA 94618. Deadline is the next to the last Tuesday of the month.

Councilmember Jane Brunner's Community Advisory Meeting

First Saturday every other month, 10am to noon. Peralta Elementary School: 460 63rd St. (parking on Alcatraz Ave., just east of Telegraph). No March meeting. More information at 238-7001 or www.oaklandnet.com

Oakland City Council Meeting

Every Tuesday, 7pm, City Hall.

Oakland Planning Commission

1st and 3rd Wednesday, each month, 6:30pm, City Hall. Agendas and details: www.oaklandnet.com.

The Greater Rockridge N'hood Crime Prevention Council

Steering Committee meets 3rd Tuesday each month, 7 to 8:30pm. Fire Station #8 community room, 463 51st Street. Residents and business members of NCPC's 12Y and 13X areas are invited to voice their concerns about crime and public safety.

Rockridge Branch Library

5366 College Avenue, 597-5017

For Children:

- Toddler Story Time: Saturday, 10:30am: 2/7, 2/14, 3/6.
- Pre-School Story Hour: Wednesday, 10:30 & 11am: 2/4, 2/18, 3/3.
- Pajama Story Time: Tuesday, 7pm: 2/24, 3/9.

Special Events:

- **Craft session for all ages**. Create your own pop-up or flat Valentines. No pre sign-up; all materials provided. Saturday, 2/7, 2 to 3:30pm.
- **Black History Month Celebration.** Spectacular and funny show by Derique. All ages welcome. Tuesday, 2/10, 7pm.
- **Celebrate Dr. Seuss's 100th birthday**. A chance to appreciate how weird our world can be. Read aloud with your kids. Cake and other surprises. Tuesday, 3/2, 7pm.

For Adults:

- **NOTE:** Lawyers in the Library: Cancelled for March; library is a polling place on March 2.

NEW LIBRARY HOURS
Tuesday, 12:30 to 8pm
Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday 10am to 5:30pm
Friday, 12 to 5:30pm
Closed: Sunday and Monday.
NOTE: All Oakland Libraries closed 2/16 for Presidents' Day.

Rockridge Toastmasters

Tuesdays, 7pm. Veterans Building, 200 Grand Ave., Oakland. Improve public speaking skills in a friendly and supportive environment. For information: Mary, 531-8790 or e-mail info@rockridgetoastmasters.org

Writer's Support/Critique Group

Rockridge Branch Library, Saturday, 2/21 from 1 to 5pm. ALL writers welcome. Bring 6 copies of 5 pages of your prose for on-site reading/discussion. Sponsored by the California Writers Club, Berkeley branch (www.berkeleywritersclub.org/). For more information: 482-0265 or Writefox@aol.com

Comedy Showcase and Open Mic

Start your career in comedy at A'Cuppa Tea, 3200 College Ave, (corner of Alcatraz). Every Tuesday, 7:30 to 9pm. Be there by 7pm to sign up. Also: Call 420-0196 to find out about free acoustic music performances from 7 to 9pm.

Diesel Book/Poetry Readings

5433 College Ave. All Events are free and open to the public.

- Sunday, 2/8, 2pm, poetry of Kathleen Fraser: *Discreet Categories Forced into Coupling*, and Claudia Keelan: readings from several of her books of poetry.
- Monday, 2/9, 7:30pm, Amnesty International monthly meeting. All welcome.
- Wednesday, 2/11, 7:30pm, Editor Leslie Miller & Contributors: *Women Who Eat: A New Generation on the Glory of Food.*
- Sunday, 2/22, 3pm, Alice Jones and Denise Newman, poetry readings.
- Thursday, 2/26, 7:30pm, Joe Coulson: *Vanishing Moon*
- Sunday, 3/7, 2pm: International Women's Day celebration.

More inf. about readings, discussion groups and classes: 653-9965 or www.dieselbookstore.com.

College Avenue Adult Center

College Ave. Presbyterian Church, 5955 College Ave. Every Wednesday, from 9:30am to 1:30pm.

- Celebrate our 33rd anniversary on Feb. 11 at 11am. Special program followed by lunch and dessert. All welcome. Light exercise, socializing, travel programs and music. Hot lunch available at noon for $2. Details about upcoming field trips and special programs: call Kathy at 531-6724.

North Oakland Multi-Purpose Senior Center

5714 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. Center Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:45am to 4:45pm. Computer classes, workshops, educational/social events, walking groups and field trips.

- Free Tax preparation help staring Feb. 6 until tax day. Call 597-5085 for appt. (between 11am and 3pm).
- Discounted tickets to Disney on Ice: limited availability.
- "Best of Big Apple" trip to New York, April 25 – 30. Deadline for tickets: Feb. 10.
- Massage services, Monday (by appointment).

The newsletter, "North Oakland Senior Times" provides a schedule of classes and a monthly lunch menu: (suggested donation: seniors age 60+ $2; $4 for those under age 60). Call 597- 5085 for membership details, newsletter, class or appointment times, and opportunities to become a volunteer.

Elder Care Support Group

Alta Bates Medical Center, Herrick Campus, 2001 Dwight Way, Berkeley, 3rd floor, room 3369B (take elevator B). Free for family/friends caring for older adults. 3rd Wednesday of each month, 4-5:30pm. For information on all support/education groups offered by Alta Bates/Sutter Health: call Monica at 802-1725 or e-mail Monicalcsw@alum.calberkeley.org.

3rd Annual Valentine's Day Cabaret

Benefit for the Julia Morgan Center for the Arts, 2640 College Avenue, Berkeley, 845-8542. February 14, 7 to 11pm. Dancing, champagne, chocolates, and Cabaret singers and guest artists from the Shotgun Players. A silent auction includes romantic hotel getaways, fine restaurants, jewelry, art, and spa and wine gift baskets. Tickets: $30 in advance / $35 at the door. CBON Ticket Line: 925/798-1300. Proceeds benefit services, programs and maintenance of the beautiful building designed by Julia Morgan.

Volunteers Needed

- Alameda County Community Food Bank: All welcome, including groups and kids age 10 or older. Assist in the warehouse or office; staff the Hunger Hotline, the Food Bank's toll-free food referral service. Hotline shifts Mon-Fri, 9am-12pm and 1-4pm. Call Volunteer Mgr. Mary Schoen: 834-FOOD(3663) or www.accfb.org.
- Oakland Elizabeth House: A Transitional Residence for Women and Children in Rockridge, 6423 Colby St., Oakland. Residential and support services to homeless and low-income women and children. Orientation and training for new volunteers. Help with childcare, homework, mentoring, field trips and house chores; 658-1380, ext.4, or volunteer@oakehouse.org.
- Oakland Parents Literacy Project: Community Activists for Reading Excellence (CARE) program. Volunteer one day or evening per month, at a School Clean Up or a Family Reading Night. OPLP hosts Family Reading Nights at 37 Oakland Schools, including two events each at Emerson, Santa Fe, and Golden Gate Elementary Schools. Care members are eligible for various benefits and prizes. George Willcoxon, Program Director: 889-5903 or www.oplp.org.
- Bambino Thrift Shop: All-volunteer shop benefiting Oakland Children's Hospital, 5290 College Ave. Volunteers needed Tuesdays through Saturdays. We will train you. Call manager, Carol Maes: 654-9709.
- North Oakland community Charter School (NOCCS): tutors to work with 1st to 4th graders, one-on-one or in small groups, on math skills, beginning reading and writing skills. Weekly commitment of at least one hour. Located at College Ave. Presb. Church. Contact Jennifer Bloom, Director: 655-0540 or teachers@noccs.org.

Mardi Gras Masked/Costume Party

Benefit for St. Augustine School, 410 Alcatraz Ave (Colby St. entrance). Saturday, February 21, 6-10p.m. New Orleans style fun, food and dancing, gift bags, raffle prizes and cooking contest. Tickets ($25 or $230 for table of 10) available at school office. Call 832-5232 or e-mail staugmardigras@hotmail.com.



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