THE Rockridge News
www.rockridge.org
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Sponsored by The Rockridge Community Planning Council • 5245 College Ave. PMB 311 • Oakland, CA 94618 • 644-4228

April RCPC General Meeting

Gardening for Pleasure, Color, Privacy and Property Value

by Jennifer Edmister

Spring is in the air! For many of us, the arrival of an early and uncommonly warm spring presents a perfect opportunity to head outdoors and tend to our gardens and grounds. On Thursday, April 15, RCPC welcomes you to join a lively panel discussion featuring some of Rockridge's finest landscape artists and gardeners. The meeting will be held at the Rockridge Library from 7-9 pm.



Spring garden blooms in Rockridge.
PHOTO: SUSAN MONTAUK

Nancy Sale, a local landscape designer with 31 years of experience, will share some of her favorite techniques for renovating small lawns and gardens. With a nod to the character of a bungalow community, Nancy enjoys designing beautiful alternatives to grass lawns, using ambling perennials and potted foliage. Nancy's green thumb has left its mark at the Berkeley Rose Garden, among other projects.

Mimi Wiesenfeld will also join our panel, offering coveted tips on foliage contrast. Mimi developed much of her expertise at the Santa Cruz Farm and Garden Project, where she practiced organic farming and gardening for years. Mimi artistically blends greenery with burgundy and other contrasting tones in shrubs and perennials, to create vibrant landscapes without excessive flowering.

The April meeting is also a must for anyone who has ever been tempted to plant a 30-foot magnolia to block the view of his neighbor's garage. Sam Bryant, owner of the Broadway Terrace Nursery, will stress the importance of selecting appropriately sized landscape materials. Larger plants and trees, if properly scaled, can be ideal for providing shade, privacy and aesthetic appeal. But, despite the recent trend favoring oversized trees, Sam cautions that a red-

▸ GARDENING, PAGE 10

agenda:
RCPC General Meeting

Thursday, April 15, 7:00 p.m.
(note time change)
Rockridge Branch Library
Community Room
5366 College Avenue at Manila

- **RCPC ELECTIONS:** The Rockridge Community Planning Council invites Rockridge residents to vote for candidates for five board positions. See candidates' statements, pages 4-5.
- **SPRING GARDENS.** Everything you ever wanted to know about gardening. A panel of Rockridge garden professionals will share their expertise and answer audience questions. Article on this page.
- **FORL ELECTIONS:** FORL holds its annual membership meeting. Become a member at this meeting. Article on page 3.
- **RCPC BY-LAWS VOTE.** Article on page 5.

RCPC Schedules Board And By-Laws Vote

Meet RCPC board candidates and vote at the General Meeting in the Rockridge Library, Thursday, April 15, 7:00-9:00 pm, or vote at the entrance to the library, Saturday, April 17, from 10-1:00 p.m. Anyone 18 or older with evidence of residence within RCPC boundaries (a driver's license, for example) is eligible to vote.

RCPC: 25 Years Of Community Volunteerism And Leadership

by Dan Ferdelman, RCPC Chair

The most important item in *The Rockridge News* this month is the annual election of the Rockridge Community Planning Council board of directors. As a *Rockridge News* reader, you probably know that the newsletter is published by RCPC, but you may not be fully aware of what RCPC is and does and why it deserves your strong support.



Dan Ferdelman

RCPC was formed initially to challenge development projects that would have drastically altered the character of our neighborhood and quality of life. Without RCPC's advocacy and vigilance, Rockridge today would be home to a 12-story, high-rise transit village along BART, as well as chain stores, fast food outlets, and a major factory. And many more Craftsman houses would have been demolished for parking and business expansion. In contrast, College Avenue today is

▸ RCPC LEGACY, PAGE 12

In Our Opinion

The Value of Diversity in Rockridge

by Lydia Gans and Hiroko Kurihara

This is the first of a series of articles that will look at our community and celebrate the people, all kinds of people, and the value that diversity brings to a neighborhood. Real estate prices indicate that we live in a "nice and desirable" neighborhood. But having a big interest in living here doesn't necessarily mean you have the big bucks to be able to move in or stay here long-term. Do we want Rockridge to be an exclusive enclave only for people who can afford to live here and are similar only to each other? We think it is diversity, in all its forms, that makes for a healthy neighborhood. Having people of different ages, interests, backgrounds and income levels interacting with each other creates a truly vibrant community.

For example, let's consider our elders in Rockridge. Our commercial neighborhood district and transit hub make it very convenient for our seniors and for those of us not quite there but who hope to grow old in this community. Many have limited incomes and can stay in their own homes because they are paid for; some live in subsidized multi-unit housing. Having someone who can communicate a bit of history or who might become a surrogate grandparent is a neighbor to treasure, not shun. We have recently heard from seniors who are being pressured to sell their homes. Is that pressure coming from greedy realtors or developers or annoyed neighbors because the landscaping and upkeep isn't perfect? We plan to look into this.

We also value diversity in housing arrangements. A neighborhood does not have to consist entirely of single-family homes. A building like Otterbein Manor, located across from the Rockridge Library, houses a special mix of 40 Chinese, Iranian, Russian, Caucasian and Korean seniors. Otterbein is managed by Satellite Housing, Inc. and offers subsidized housing for people with low incomes. In these economic times, it would be particularly unfortunate if Satellite were forced to sell this valuable property and displace our community members. There was a threat to that effect last spring when a Texas-based company came around.

If we want to promote neighborhood-serving businesses (rather than becoming "Restaurant Row just a quick turn off "Auto Row"), we need to increase the number and types of housing opportunities on and near College Avenue, as our C-31 zoning designation allows. Furthermore, it is the diversity of people within a neighborhood, patronizing the shops, the coffee houses, restaurants and other businesses that will encourage a variety of neighborhood services (like a post office or local pharmacy) to thrive. To create an interesting cultural life and exchange in Rockridge, it will take a conscientious effort to offer those who have a desire to live in Rockridge the opportunity to live here, use the library, attend the churches and community events, stop to chat as we pass each other on the street, support each other and enrich all our lives as an inclusive community.

In the coming months we will pursue these issues through more articles. Let us know what you think. If you're interested in being part of positive change, contact Hiroko Kurihara at h2Oakland@sbcglobal.net or 384-0557 and Lydia Gans at lydiagans@juno.com or 658-4445.



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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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Annual subscriptions to ***The Rockridge News*** can be obtained by sending a check for $18, payable to *Rockridge News* Subscriptions to: *Rockridge News* Subscriptions at the address below.

Contacting *The Rockridge News*

- Are there community issues you'd like to see covered in ***The Rockridge News***?
- Do you have questions about newsletter distribution?
- Would you like to volunteer to be a *Rockridge News* block captain?

Contact us at one of the following addresses or telephone numbers:

Editor: editor@rockridge.org
www.rockridge.org
The Rockridge News, 5245 College Avenue, PMB 311, Oakland, CA 94618
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Newsletter Advertising/Deadlines

Publication date of the next issue is

- **May 8, 2004**
- **May deadline is April 22**

Advertising rates are $22/column inch. Six-month pre-pay rate available. To advertise, call Jo Ellis at 653-3210, or e-mail joellis1@hotmail.com. ***(RCPC reserves the right to refuse any display or classified ad that it deems inappropriate.)***

Progress for Library Friends

by Marilyn Citroen

It is donation time! Your generous contribution to the Friends of the Rockridge Library will help our mission of supporting the Rockridge Branch and enriching the lives of the people who use its resources. FORL and the Rockridge Branch staff are excited about the passage of Measure Q with a phenomenal voter approval of 77%. But our branch still needs your help. FORL's funding provides books, periodicals and programs that would not otherwise be available. You make the difference.

Gifts: 2003 was an exciting year. FORL's gifts to the library included a classical music collection of more than 250 compact discs; on-going newspaper, magazine and financial publications not included in the city budget (for example, the *New York Times* and *Value Line*); and two complete sets of all NOLO Press books currently in print, one for reference and one for circulation. In addition, on Monday, October 20, 2003, the Friends hosted their first Donor Appreciation party, bringing together library staff, FORL Board members and donors for an evening of wine, cheese and conversation.

Programs: 2003 was the first year of the Summer Scholarship, which provided grants to two Oakland Technical High School students to assist library staff during July and August. We also helped fund the summer Teen Hip Hop workshop, which offered a class on this contemporary song-and-dance style. The kids loved it!

Legal: the FORL board is currently amending its bylaws through our *pro bono* attorney John Gussman. Proposed changes include an increase in the number of board members.

Thanks: FORL thanks all 2003 donors and hopes they will contribute again in 2004. Also welcome are donations of books which are then sold on the library book cart.* As another alternative, Diesel Books has a "wish" list for the library where you can purchase and they will deliver a book of your choice.

Join us at our annual FORL meeting Thursday, April 15, at the Rockridge Library (part of the RCPC General Meeting that night).

** Please consult library staff regarding donation guidelines. For example: no textbooks, magazines, etc.*

Friends of the Rockridge Library 2004 Donation

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Please make checks payable to FORL and mail to:

Friends of the Rockridge Library, 5245 College Avenue #311, Oakland, CA 94618

Thank You!

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The Zoning Counter

The Zoning Counter provides Rockridge residents with an opportunity to review construction project proposals to be undertaken in their neighborhoods. While it is a compilation of recent applications filed with the Oakland Planning Department, it is not necessarily a complete or up-to-date listing. Individuals may contact the Case Planner or the Planning Department for additional information.

426 51st Street

Proposal: To construct a 193 square foot one-story addition to a 1,783 square foot single family dwelling and to merge two parcels under common ownership into one parcel.

Applicant: Jane Burton

Owner: Jane Burton

Contact Person/Phone Number: Jane Burton 510/428-9570

Planning Permits Required: Minor Variance for a 7'-06" rear yard setback where 15'-0" is required and a Parcel Map Waiver to merge two contiguous parcels under common ownership into one parcel.

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

5448 Manila Avenue

Project Description: Construct a 605 square foot second story addition to an existing one story 1,258 square foot single family residence.

Owner/Applicant: Kathryn Rogers

Phone Number: 510/526-2720

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



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Board Candidates Offer Qualifications for Election

Ehab Bandar
Forest Street



I am running for the RCPC Board because I believe that Rockridge is one of those rare places whose strength lies in its diversity. Living in Rockridge has taught me that beautiful places require the involvement of many people committed to improving the community in countless ways. Without such community activism, the interests of a few can quickly overwhelm the wishes of the many. Against this backdrop, we all must protect the eclectic mix that makes Rockridge a truly special place to live, work, and shop.

I bring a unique perspective to the Board. I grew up in the East Bay and lived all over the country, but have returned again and again to the character, vibrancy, and openness that define the Bay Area and Rockridge in particular.

Thank you for this opportunity. If elected, I promise to fight for the interests of the people who make up this great community.

Star Lightner
61st Street



My name is Star Lightner and I'd like to serve on the RCPC Board because I want to do something more than simply live in Rockridge — I want to contribute to what makes Rockridge the kind of place you call home, no matter how far away you move.

I grew up in Rockridge. I lived on Birch Court, went to Chabot and Claremont, and when we moved to Southern California, all I could think about was how to get back here. Now my husband Ben and I and our baby son Ethan live near Colby Park. Soon we'll be visiting the library and thinking about elementary schools.

RCPC is a huge part of what fills the gap between what our children, and all the residents of Rockridge, could and should have. As an attorney, I recognize the importance of both advocacy and diplomacy, and hope to utilize those skills on behalf of my community as a member of the RCPC Board.

Camille Reed
Rockwell Street



I would be honored to be considered for the RCPC Board. I grew up in the neighborhood and moved back after an absence of over 35 years in 1998. I would welcome the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to maintaining the quality and integrity of this exceptional neighborhood. I also have many ideas about how to make it even more delightful.

I would bring the skill sets I developed as an executive director of three orchestras and an arts council. I have worked on neighborhood revitalization, fundraising, event creation, planning and forging community partnerships. I presently teach at the University level and am a non-profit consultant.

I have strong organizational, strategic planning, verbal and written skills and deeply believe in the importance of planning, vision, community input and participation, and sensitive and strong leadership.

Vote at the RCPC meeting Thursday, April 15, 7-9 pm (note earlier meeting start time) in the Rockridge Library, or on Saturday, April 17, 10 am-1 pm, outside the library entrance.

Mike McDonald
Locksley Avenue



Mike lives on Locksley Avenue with his wife Jill, and their 7-month old daughter Jenner, in a Craftsman bungalow that Mike & Jill renovated from the ground up in 1999. Mike is a licensed general contractor specializing in residential and commercial remodels and a Realtor with Lawton Associates. Mike has been active in community projects including FROG park, Firestation 8, and most recently with the Locksley Gardens Project.

Asked why he loves Rockridge, McDonald replies: "What's not to love about it? Great weather, great neighbors, great shops and restaurants, convenient transportation… this place is awesome!" Asked why he wants to serve on the RCPC Board, McDonald is succinct: "I want to make a difference in my community." Specifically, McDonald cites the UnderBART project, crime prevention, and general traffic and planning issues as his main RCPC Board interests.

Mike Taylor
Ross Circle



I am a recent Rockridge resident who is interested in preserving our wonderful neighborhood. Great neighborhoods do not happen by accident — they require lots of individuals to work together and I want to help in this effort. My background as a teacher and technology manager has drawn me to work with schools and the Rockridge.org website. I was appointed to fill a vacant board position in December and hope to continue the aforementioned work for at least the next two years.

Suzanne Thompson
Coronado Avenue

In my search for a new place to call home three years ago, I was drawn to Rockridge for its charming homes and rare mixed-use composition. Since then, my appreciation for this dynamic, pedestrian-friendly community has only increased, and now it's time to give something back. I believe in RCPC's mission for providing Rockridge residents with support, representation, and opportunities for community involvement, and would be honored to join the board of directors.

My qualifications include a professional background in business analysis and software design, an English degree from Cal, and 6 years of experience as a volunteer advisor for the Youth & Government program. I hope to apply my strengths to the RCPC board to facilitate positive change and growth in our unique community.

Deborah Weinstein
Boyd Avenue



When I moved to the neighborhood three years ago, I was attracted to Rockridge's strong community that reflects my own values. My past volunteer experience includes: Auxiliary Board Member, ODC/SF, Executive Board Member, San Francisco Street Project, Community Garden Coordinator, San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners.

In April 2002, I was thrilled to be elected to serve on the RCPC Board. Since then, I've worked on the Rockridge Schools Committee, which presented the first Community Service Grant to a Rockridge public school, as Co-Chair of the 2003 Rockridge Kitchen Tour, as Secretary, and currently as Vice Chair.

If elected, my focus will be bringing volunteers into our schools, developing a volunteer participation network for Rockridge, and looking for ways to celebrate together as a community.

RCPC Seeks Vote to Expand Board From 11 to 14 Directors

by Dan Ferdelman, RCPC Chair

The RCPC Board of Directors has recommended changes to the organization's bylaws to increase the number of elected Directors from 11 to 13, and to add one appointed, non-voting member. By expanding its Board, RCPC will be better able to achieve its goals, attract members with appropriate expertise, and staff its standing committees: Land Use, Schools, Public Safety, *The Rockridge News*, Parks, Traffic & Pedestrian Safety, Fundraising and Website. These changes, shown below, must be approved by a majority of Rockridge residents who are present and voting at the April general membership meeting. Anyone 18 or older with evidence of residence within Rockridge boundaries may vote at the meeting on Thursday, April 15, 7-9 pm (note earlier meeting start time) in the Rockridge Library, or on Saturday, April 17, 10 am-1 pm, outside the library entrance.

The Bylaws of the Rockridge Community Planning Council are hereby amended as follows: Section 8.2 ("Number and Qualification of Directors"), is amended to read: "The authorized number of directors shall be fourteen (14), of whom thirteen (13) shall be voting directors and one (1) shall be a non-voting director. There shall be two categories of voting directors: (a) twelve (12) directors who meet the criteria of Section 5.1 of Article V shall be elected by the membership according to the provisions of Article VII. (b) [existing appointive position is unchanged] the position of non-voting director shall be filled by the editor-in-chief of *The Rockridge News*, provided that a contract is in effect between the editor-in-chief and the corporation, and provided further, that the board shall have discretion to appoint an alternate to serve in the event that the editor-in-chief is unable to attend one or more meetings of the board."

In Section 8.3 ("Election and Term of Office of Directors; Limitation on Elected Terms"), subsection (a) is amended to read: "At each annual meeting of the members, six (6) of the twelve (12) directors in subsection (a) of Section 8.2, shall be elected to serve until the end of the annual meeting in the second calendar year after the year of their election. Of the two additional voting positions on the board of directors created by amendment of section 8.2 in April, 2004, one position shall be currently filled by election on the same date, pursuant to the preceding sentence; and the other position shall be filled by appointment of the board, according to the terms of section 8.6, until the annual meeting in April 2005, at which time that position shall be filled by election, pursuant to the preceding sentence."

The Rockridge News Needs Block Captains

Do you have 10-20 minutes to spare each month? Would you like to dedicate this time to your community? Here are two delivery routes that need volunteers:

#11F **Block Captain:** From 5418 College, even numbers along College up Manila, then across the street to the corner of Bryant and Manila down the odd numbers of 5400 Manila to College.

#15C **Block Captain**: Both sides of 5100 Lawton and down 51st Street to Shafter.

Please call 547-3855 or e-mail Susan at smontauk@juno.com to volunteer.

Ready for Summer? Get Your Rockridge T-Shirt!

As part of its fund-raising activity, RCPC offers Rockridge-specific merchandise: t-shirts, mugs, and canvas tote bags. Merchandise may be ordered via on-line mail-in coupon available at www.rockridge.org.



Residents Stumped by City's Tree-Removal Plans

by Perry Riani

Have you noticed that the most sought-after neighborhoods, like Rockridge, have beautiful tree-lined streets? Not only do these wonderful trees make attractive neighborhoods, they increase property values.

What if city officials told residents that the trees were making it so costly to maintain sidewalks that they were going to chop many of them down?

That's what's happening in Oakland. Last year, Glenview residents were outraged when the city mowed down more than 20% of the liquidambar trees on Wellington Avenue, giving them only two days'notice. Now, according to a proposal that reached Jane Brunner's office early this year, the city plans to remove all trees that create potential hazards.

It's not clear whether the city is planning to replace the trees. At a recent RCPC meeting, RCPC President Dan Ferdelman announced that the city's proposal calls for simply putting in asphalt patches. City Council President Ignacio de la Fuente, however, was quoted in the *Montclarion* as saying that trees will be replaced. Even so, many residents are up in arms about the prospect of their mature trees being replaced with young ones.

What is clear is that, in cases where trees are not replaced, or in simple sidewalk repairs, the city most likely will use asphalt. City personnel told one Rockridge resident who requested a sidewalk repair a few months ago that he would be "lucky to get concrete within two years," and that the "best they could do" was asphalt.

A recent article in the *Montclarion* said the city is using the $620K that it paid out last year in lawsuits from sidewalk injuries to justify the plan from a financial point of view. Residents, though, are alarmed at the potential loss in property values.

"I am totally outraged by this if it indeed becomes policy," Lawton Avenue resident Ron Kriss said. Kriss, a real estate broker, estimated a loss of $40K in property tax revenue for the county for his block alone, based on removal (and non-replacement) of hazardous trees and an estimated 5% loss in property values. That number, he emphasized, would have to be multiplied by the number of blocks in the city.

There clearly is a need for sidewalk repair in Rockridge. In January, Taft Avenue resident Bill Kaufner, program manager for the Pacific Disability Business and Technical Assistance Center that provides information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), sent his neighbors an e-mail that began: "After tripping and almost flipping, I began to realize that the condition of some of our sidewalks is pretty dangerous, especially at night."

Indeed, many Taft Avenue residents often see a wheelchair-bound neighbor traveling down the middle of the street, even in the dark. "When wheelchairs flip over," Kaufner said in an interview, "that's when the occupants become totally helpless." He added that the city of Sacramento is currently the target of a major lawsuit by a disability rights advocacy group in part because of its crumbling sidewalks.

The city's original proposal listed over 10 conditions calling for tree removal, including obstruction of traffic signs, roots that have outgrown their curb space, and proximity to phone and electrical wires.



Some Rockridge sidewalks have been dramatically affected by tree roots. Is removal the only option?

PHOTO: SUSAN MONTAUK

Residents have suggested alternate solutions: If trees block signs, lights or utility equipment, organize a pruning plan. PG&E takes on some of this task already. If roots are causing sidewalks to buckle, create a larger opening around the tree. Move the sidewalk closer to the homeowner's property to maintain ADA requirements. If a tree is diseased, plant a new tree of a different type not susceptible to the disease; once the new tree is mature, remove the diseased tree.



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5887 Margarido	$1,195,000	$1,300,000	3/16/2004
5946 Oceanview	$699,000	$876,000	3/16/2004

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5117 Lawton	$775,000	$775,000	3/5/2004

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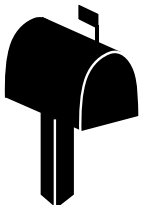
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Letters to The Editor

The Rockridge News
5245 College Ave., PMB 311
Oakland, CA 94618
or e-mail:
editor@rockridge.org

Enjoyed the February Issue

Editor:

I just wanted to say that I thought the Feb 6 issue of *The Rockridge News* was the best in the 5+ years we've lived in the area. Keep up the good work.

Jean Durall
Hudson St

OUSD Clueless

Editor:

With disgust I read your recent interview with School Board member Kerry Hamill headlined, "Forced Closures Poor Way to Fix Oakland Schools" (Feb 6, p.1). It's appalling to read that the folks in charge of the Oakland Unified School District remain clueless about the massive multi-million dollar spending deficits that have happened on their watch. And here in *The Rockridge News* we were treated to a whiny, one-sided rant by someone that was derelict in her official duty. Shame.

James K. Sayre
James Avenue

Renter Priced Out of Rockridge

Editor:

I'm writing in reaction to "Real Estate in Rockridge" (Feb.6, p.1) by Ortrun Niesar. My boyfriend and I have rented in Rockridge for more than ten years. As professionals, we make the bulk of our money through full-time editorial jobs and our combined income has grown from $70K to $130K. And yet we're still unable to afford a home in Rockridge.

Niesar happily declares that "compared with 2002, our homes sold substantially over asking price. In fact, 2003 was our best year ever!" This gushing praise of the home seller's fat bounty without so much as a nod to the renter's purgatory is simply insensitive. The economy went bust in 2001, but housing prices in the area continue to surge out of control: this does not bode well for the economic health of the East Bay community.

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Confessions of an RCPC Chair

by Dan Ferdelman, RCPC Chair

The Rockridge Community Planning Council does not make decisions lightly. Once we receive notice of a project that requires special conditional use permits or a variance, we review it carefully, meet with the applicants, note comments of the planning staff and listen to the concerns of neighbors. Of great importance is whether the project is in keeping with the scope and character of C-31 zoning designation and the Rockridge Area Plan. Throughout the process, we work with the parties and planning department to resolve differences before making a final decision whether or not to oppose. We prefer to work out issues before they necessitate the involvement of the planning commission. This can be a long, arduous and sometimes contentious process.

Time pressure can compromise the process, as happened recently with the Rockridge Montessori School's (5616 Broadway at Manila) proposal to expand their 38-child daycare facility to 132 by purchase and development of a church at 5633 Manila Avenue.

The Land Use Committee, the RCPC Board of Directors and I reviewed the application, noted the planning and engineering departments' reservations, reviewed the history of the original Montessori school and met with neighbors concerned over a project of this scope in a residential area which could generate noise and serious traffic and parking problems. Because of scheduling conflicts, however, I was unable to meet with the applicants before I went to the planning commission to report RCPC's opposition.

At the meeting, a large group of day school parents described the acute shortage of daycare facilities in Oakland and persuaded the planning commission to approve the project, provided the school worked with neighbors to mitigate traffic and parking problems. I was surprised by the size and zeal of the parents' delegation and the shortage of day school facilities they described, and regretted not having met with the applicants beforehand. A meeting might not have changed my mind or RCPC's decision to oppose, but I failed a cardinal rule of RCPC: to hear all sides of an issue before taking action.

This case, however, illustrates how elusive and difficult it is to achieve an equitable settlement. Which is more important, the parent's need for more day schools or the residents' right to enjoy their homes and neighborhood in peace and quiet? At latest word, the local homeowners are working with the applicants to find a better arrangement of traffic and parking, one that will work for parents and neighbors alike. RCPC will await the final plan and will amend its decision based on the latest findings, weighing whether to appeal the planning commision's verdict.

As Chair of RCPC I accept responsibility for ensuring a fair hearing to both sides prior to RCPC determing its stance. The Land Use Committee is revising procedures to ensure prompt communication with applicants, city staff and affected neighbors. I and my RCPC colleagues are dedicated to enlightened discussions of the issues that affect Rockridge and strive to make it a neighborhood the works for the residents, businesses and institutions.

Hop To It At Frogpark Community Day

by Carroll Moore,
Frogpark Steering Committee

Frogpark needs your help on Saturday, May 1, from 9 to noon at our annual Spring Community Day.

This is everyone's opportunity to be a Frogpark volunteer and contributor. We built these playgrounds with our own hands, and that's how we continue to ensure their future. We sweep, rake, collect trash and do other family-friendly tasks each spring (and do major maintenance in the fall). Bring children of all ages — there's something for everyone to do.

Come to either the Hardy or Redondo play structures with your work gloves and a garden rake, broom and/or hand whisk. Mark your belongings to identify them. Cold beverages and water will be provided for all volunteers.

Want to do more? We need six adult volunteers to act as Captains for the Community Day. Captains will answer questions and help guide the work as needed. No special tool skills required. Please contact carroll@rdlab.com soon if you'd like a spot on the Captains team.

Frog depends tremendously on the support of everyone who uses and enjoys our great community parks. Mark your calendar, spread the word and come lend a hand.

Merchant Association Spruces Up College Avenue

by Cy Gulassa

Spring cleaning has new meaning along the length of College Avenue. Tree wells and street gutters are litter-free, new trash cans are strategically placed, and with trees in full bloom, the street looks ready for a parade.



Louise Rothman-Riemer, Rockridge District Association Chair.

PHOTO: CY GULASSA

The merchants group responsible for the spruce-up hopes that parade will consist of shoppers looking for bargains, gifts, a great dining experience or just a good place to sit with a latte and a bestseller from one of the bookstores.

In 1999, eager to preserve the entrepreneurial spirit of College Avenue businesses—it's one of the few strips in Oakland free of chain stores and big-box retail—a group of merchants created the Rockridge District Association. Funded by self-imposed taxes, the association's mission is to collaborate with merchants and the community to make College Avenue a great place to do business, shop and relax.

It's doing just that, according to RDA Chair Louise Rothman Riemer, who spoke to residents at RCPC's March meeting. RDA funds street sweeping, extra security during holidays, promotes fairs and events, and works with the city to ease parking, improve landscaping, add more benches and remove blight like old news racks. It's also partnering with RCPC on the UnderBART project to make that area more useful and attractive. One future project includes street banners for the street's 60 poles. Residents at the meeting suggested installing smart new street lighting, but Riemer says the cost is plain prohibitive.

The organization distributes an attractive brochure entitled "Out and About on College Ave" that lists all businesses and services, and regularly advertises in the *Montclarion* and *Contra Costa Times.*

Information about the mission, staff and schedule of meetings is available on the RDA website: www.rockridgedistrict.com.

Letters, from page 7

The homeowners of Rockridge should be chagrined to their toes for insisting upon as much as $550K for a two-bedroom, 1,200 square-foot box. They've got to be kidding!

Merrill Gillaspy
No Address Provided

Check Urgent Care Coverage First

Editor:

I'm glad you spread the word about Sutter Health Urgent Care in the recent *Rockridge News* article by Claire Isaacs ("Urgency or Emergency?" March 6, p. 9). While health-care access is no problem at this wonderful facility, reimbursement from your insurance company may be. The Alta Bates Medical Group Medical Director, Brian Ely, MD, stated at a recent meeting that Alta Bates HMO terminated its contract with Sutter for financial reasons and that its members will once again have to be treated at the ER for urgent matters. The best way to find out if your visit will be covered is by calling the member services number of your insurance company.

Frances Dalton, MD
Rockridge

Sutter Article a Big Help

Editor:

Thanks to Claire Isaacs, ("Urgency or Emergency," March 9) my marriage is still intact. On our recent visit to the Bay Area, my husband, a misguided romantic, made me a beautiful necklace of a vine and small perforated rocks he found on a Bolinas beach. Lovely, except the vine turned out to be poison oak and I became a true redneck. Dreading a long wait in ER, I remembered Claire's article and drove to Urgent Care where I received immediate professional treatment. Thanks! In the next issue, please have some botanist explain to my husband how to identify poisonous vines no matter how pretty the sea has made them.

C. Hernfeld
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Orunamamu: Rockridge Storyteller

by Ortrun Niesar

I was sitting at Oliveto's one recent Wednesday morning, revving up for my business day with a strong cup of coffee, cell phone at the ready. A pleasant voice behind me said, "If you see a feather, a soft and tickly little feather, pick it up. It's a letter for you. Pick it up and put it in your pocket." I turned around and there was the lovely, ageless face of Orunamamu grinning at me with a most heartwarming smile.

I had wanted to meet this wonderful lady, Rockridge's very own world-class storyteller, for some time now, and there she was, green velvet chapeau, quilted jacket, yellow stockings (her trademark), necklaces and bangles, numerous bags and a sturdy walking stick, the mark of the *griot*. "Stories are like feathers," Orunamamu laughed. "They blow here and there, they swing in circles and settle wherever they will, soft and mysterious. And when someone picks one up, an adventure begins." Well, she had me. I turned off the cell phone and followed her for that day. We talked together no end.

She has no cell phone or even a regular phone. She has a house, but it's a house that is turned inside out and you most likely won't find her there, because to find a feather, as everyone knows, you must go out to where the feathers are. And so her house on Ocean View, just off College, is not so much a house as it is a public private museum, a repository of all the adventures and stories she brings home with her each day. If you are lucky you will find Orunamamu (meaning morning star in Yoruba) sitting on her front steps among a panoply of colorful objects, handing out stories or inviting you to tell one.

She was born Marybeth Washington in Wisconsin, the daughter of an army staff sergeant, and grew up in a family where generosity, love of family and story telling mattered most. She remembers her grandmother admonishing her to hush up because it was not yet her time to talk. Someday, she was told, when she was old and wise, it would be her turn and others would listen.



Orunamamu: Storyteller

PHOTO: ORTRUN NIESAR

After graduating from Payne College, Augusta, Georgia, — that was in 1943 — she became a teacher. Story telling was always a part of her, but it was not until she came to California in the '60s that she developed her storytelling skill and wisdom, nurtured by Quaker artists Trudi Regon and Meg Pelley and Peninsula storyteller Pat Brown, all of whom played a huge part in her life. "I am not a Quaker, but Quakerism is in the fabric of my life", she says.

She settled in her home on Ocean View in 1967, married twice and raised two sons, one an attorney, the other a writer of legal and educational books. Her expression changes briefly as she tells me about the racial strife in the '60s and '70s in the Bay Area. She did have a job almost all of the time — as a token teacher being passed around the Berkeley school system to fulfill the obligatory diversity requirements and with little to do. Some may remember her teaching black history at Vista College from 1979 on. But, what does it matter, she says. "You never make up your mind about a person until you meet them and get to know them." And life does go on. For her it's been nearly 90 years now, as far as I can surmise.

Telling a story for Orunamamu is like "dancing to the thunder and the irresistible rhythm of life." You can't do it timidly, you must give it space and authority, bcause stories carry within them the most ancient expressions of human consciousness. She advises all to read everything from the classics to native tales from around the world. But that in itself is not enough to bring the story forth. The real secret is to find an object that speaks to you and to connect to it at the deepest level; do that and a mighty story will happen. And, she says, "don't be too hasty to throw out things half-used. After all, how will you ever get to the core of anything? The real story is the marrow, and that is in the bones, don't you know."

We spent the day moving from place to place. Had the best senior lunch in town at the West Berkeley YMCA Center. From there it was on to the West Berkeley Senior Center to attend a black history celebration. That night she was to leave for a stay on the Peninsula as the storyteller grandmother-in-residence. A life full of adventure! But Orunamamu is getting tired. It's time to pass on the mantle, she says. She is looking for an intern, a student. "Rockridge needs its storyteller. It's important." If you are interested in meeting Orunamamu, look for her early on Wednesday mornings at Oliveto's. Or stop by her house on Ocean View and leave a story on her front door. She'll be so delighted.

Ortrun Niesar can be reached at oniesar@aol.com.

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Rockridge Crime Report 2/15 to 3/14

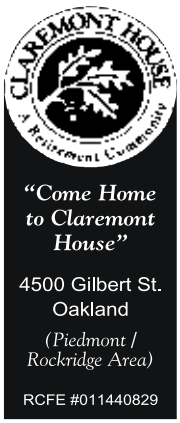
Compiled by Jennifer Barragan Edmister, RCPC Director

Beat 12Y

2/15/04...	Shooting towards inhabited dwelling	Early A.M.	5416 Telegraph Ave.
	... Robbery	Early A.M.	450 59th St.
	... Attempt. Res. Burglary	Early P.M.	6073 Claremont Ave.
2/17/04...	Auto Burglary	A.M.	6286 Colby St.
2/18/04...	Commercial Burglary	Early A.M.	5291 College Ave.
2/21/04...	Auto Burglary	Early A.M.	4000 Claremont Ave.
	... Assault/Deadly Weapon	Early A.M.	Telegraph/Alcatraz
	... Petty Theft		500 Martin St.
2/22/04...	False Impersonation		474 59th St.
2/23/04...	Residential Burglary	A.M.	6220 Hillegass Ave.
	... Residential Burglary	Early P.M.	5253 Shafter Ave.
2/24/04...	Robbery	A.M.	5800 Presley Wy.
	... Residential Burglary	Afternoon	476 Hardy St.
2/25/04...	Auto Theft	Early P.M.	5860 Ocean View Dr.
2/26/04...	Auto Burglary	Early P.M.	5554 Claremont Ave.
2/27/04...	Auto Theft	A.M.	Miles/College
	... Burglary	A.M.	479 North St.
	... Residential Burglary	A.M.	433 Alcatraz Ave.
2/29/04...	Auto Burglary	Early P.M.	400 66th St.
3/2/04...	Residential Burglary	Early P.M.	5216 Desmond St.
	... Residential Burglary	A.M.	433 Alcatraz Ave.
3/3/04...	Petty Theft	A.M.	5830 Ayala Ave.
	... Auto Burglary	Early P.M.	5221 Locksley Ave.
3/7/04...	Assault/Deadly Weapon	Early A.M.	400 Alcatraz Ave.
	... Petty Theft	A.M.	5800 Claremont Ave.
	... Petty Theft	Early P.M.	6435 Benvenue Ave.
3/8/04...	Auto Burglary		5216 James Ave.
3/9/04...	Residential Burglary	Early P.M.	5309 Locksley Ave.
	... Auto Theft	Afternoon	6334 Telegraph Ave.
3/10/04...	Auto Burglary	Early A.M.	6121 Harwood Ave.
3/12/04...	Auto Burglary	Early A.M.	5934 Telegraph Ave.
3/13/04...	Arson	Early A.M.	5311 Miles Ave.
3/14/04...	Petty Theft	Early A.M.	5727 College Ave.

Beat 13X

2/16/04...	Attempt. Auto Theft	Early P.M.	4401 Harbord Dr.
	... Auto Burglary	P.M.	6181 Brookside Ave.
2/20/04...	Auto Theft	A.M.	6067 Manchester Dr.
3/5/04...	Auto Burglary	Early P.M.	Broadway/Freeway 24
3/8/04...	False Impersonation		5836 Mendocino Ave.
3/9/04...	Auto Burglary	Late P.M.	5644 Broadway Terr.



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EPIC Alcohol Study Needs Your Help

Environmental Prevention In Communities (EPIC) of the Alcohol Policy Network recently developed a collaborative project to address crime and blight in Oakland by, among other things, tabulating window signage of stores that sell liquor. EPIC surveyed a total of 90 stores in Fruitvale to assess their conformity to standards, and in March and April will conduct a comparison survey in the Rockridge and Montclair areas.

EPIC would like your support and help. To participate in this survey, call Program Coordinator Kara Andrade at 510/384-0788 or send an email to youthepic@yahoo.com.

Gardening

from page 1

wood in the back yard is not always a good choice.

Local arborist Matt Horn will also join the panel to address common concerns regarding Oakland street trees. Matt will explain who owns the trees that dot our Rockridge streets and sidewalks, and who is responsible for maintaining them. By popular request, Matt will also offer a few pieces of timely advice about the dreaded aphid epidemic in Northern California.

After the last tree has been trimmed, and the last plant potted, many agree that a cherished landscape is not complete without the benefit of illumination. Dan Pitcock, a former RCPC board member, specializes in landscape lighting design. Dan works with landscape architects in Rockridge and throughout the East Bay, using gentle illumination to enhance outdoor spaces while providing additional security.

Join us on April 15, as these and other professionals offer their best tips to help beautify your outdoor home space, increase your property value, and soothe your soul.

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Pieces of Cloth, Pieces of Culture

In recent years, one of the most exciting developments at CCA has been the establishment of the Center for Art and Public Life. The Center's aim is to encourage creative activity and practice in our society through community partnerships between artists and the diverse cultures of the Bay Area. Living where we do, we are lucky enough to be able to share in this experience. For this current academic year, for example, women artists from Oakland's Tongan community have been participating in a study of Tongan culture, art and religious practices. At the center of this project is the ritual making of a 15'x15' ceremonial tapa cloth from the bark of the mulberry tree, something that has never happened before on American soil. The project is entitled "Pieces of Cloth, Pieces of Culture" and provides a unique opportunity to learn more about the Pacific Islander traditions our Tongan neighbors have brought with them to these shores. The lead artist is Oakland resident Siu Tuita, musician and dancer and member of the Tongan royal family, who has dedicated much of her energy to preserving the Tongan way of life for Tongan youth born in America. Demonstrations, including traditional chanting and dance, and lectures for the general public will take place on April 6 and 13 at the Far West School, 5263 Broadway and on April 19 and 20 at the Oliver Art Center on the CCA campus. Call the Center at 594-3763 for more information. And keep watching for more such wonderful programs.

The Rockridge Muse

by Ortrun Niesar

Storytelling

If you want to try your hand at telling a story, or just listen to others tell theirs, the Alta California storytelling group meets at 7 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month at the Claremont Branch of the Berkeley Library. You can just drop by, then learn more about the local storytelling network. The Annual Bay Area Festival takes place May 22 and 23 at the Kennedy Grove Regional Recreation Center in El Sobrante (off San Pablo Dam Road, easy to get to). These are two full days of delectable storytelling by some of the best storytellers from around the country! There will be time to swap some of your own tales too. Food and drink will be available to purchase, but you can bring a picnic as well. There will be a quilt raffled off at the end of the festival. Another piece of cloth embodying culture. Go to www.bayareastorytelling.org or call 869-4946.

Rockridge Photography Exhibition 2004

Here is an opportunity for you to help build the fabric of our own local culture and traditions. The Fourth Annual Rockridge Photography show will take place in October this year. Participation is open to enthusiastic photographers of all ages and skill levels. You must live and/or work or attend school in and around our neighborhood, though. If you plan to participate, it's not too early to start toting your camera around with you. We can also use some volunteers to give us a hand. For more information, please call Lydia Gans at 658-4445.

Note: please contact me about your upcoming event no later than the 10th of the month prior to publication. Oniesar@aol.com or 652-6664.

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RCPC Legacy

from page 1

home to privately owned, entrepreneurial enterprises that give the major artery its character and hometown attractiveness. In its 2002 survey of the "Ten Best Places to Live in America," *Money* magazine listed Rockridge as one of the three best in the San Francisco Bay Area. That did not happen by accident.

Now in its 25th year, RCPC is a non-profit organization staffed by a volunteer army for the betterment of the Rockridge community. It is funded by donations, sales of merchandise, advertising and the biennial Kitchen Tour. At monthly meetings the directors set policy, review development projects and act on the recommendations of the organization's committees.

As chair, I serve at the pleasure of an 11-member board of directors that we hope to increase to 13, if Rockridge residents approve the by-law changes (⧫ see proposal, page 5). In addition, we hope to create a non-voting, appointed seat for the editor of *The Rockridge News* to assure good, two-way communications. The goal is to expand representation and strengthen our service to the community. This year we have an outstanding slate of candidates for the RCPC board. Please carefully read their credentials and statements (⧫ pages 4 and 5), come to the General Meeting in the Rockridge Library, Thursday, April 15, 7:00-9:00 pm (note earlier start time), and hear them in person and then vote, or vote at the entrance to the library, Saturday, April 17, from 10-1:00 p.m. Any person 18 or over residing within the RCPC boundaries is eligible to vote.

Directors also serve as representatives on at least one of RCPC's standing committees. The committees focus on critical community issues, including Land Use, Traffic and Pedestrian Safety, Schools, Parks, Fundraising, Website, and *The Rockridge News*, which reports on board matters as well as items of general interest to the community. Published monthly, *The Rockridge News* is supported primarily by advertising and is hand-delivered to homes and businesses by 148 volunteers.

In addition to these standing committees, RCPC provides administrative oversight for, and strongly supports through advocacy and grants, other organizations that spring from the organization's involvement in the community, such as Friends of the Rockridge Library (FORL) and FROGPark, both of which have enriched Rockridge.

Has RCPC's long struggle to preserve the neighborhood been worth it? I for one unequivocally say, YES. Is RCPC infallible in its positions? NO. But rest assured, whatever its decisions, RCPC's fundamental commitment has been, and is, to preserve and enhance the quality of life in Rockridge. To all of those who for decades have labored to make Rockridge the ideal community it is today, I say thank you. To all of those working selflessly today to support and enhance that legacy, again I say thank you.

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Temescal Creek Earth Day Cleanup Set for April 24

The DMV Neighbors Association, under the City of Oakland's Adopt-a-Creek Program, is hosting its annual Temescal Creek/Redondo Park cleanup followed by a delicious potluck lunch. We clean, prune, sweep and rake in the Greenbelt from Clark and Redondo, down Redondo along the creek to the DMV, and along the path next to the creek up to Clifton. Volunteers are welcome, as are all who have worked on the play structures and the Greenbelt.

The cleanup begins 9am, Saturday, April 24; sign in at the parking lot behind the DMV office at Claremont and Cavour. Coffee and pastries donated by local merchants will be available. The first 50 volunteers will be given commemorative t-shirts. We will have a large water cooler; bring your own bottles. A limited supply of tools and gloves will be provided by the city. Be sure to label personal tools. Wheelbarrows are useful, as green waste is stacked, not bagged.

Lunch will be served in Mike Bogart's driveway at 5275 Redondo Avenue, and tables set up in the adjoining park at Redondo and Cavour. Continuing a much-loved tradition, the Colombo Club will provide pasta and garlic bread. Bring your favorite side dish or salad. The DNA group will supply cold beverages, coffee and dessert.

Thanks in advance for your participation — the parks and the creek always look so much nicer after our efforts!

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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. April topics: Trees, design review and zoning update. No May 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, 6:30pm, City Hall. Agendas, details at 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, 463 51st Street. Residents and business members of NCPC's 12Y and 13X areas are invited.

Rockridge Branch Library

5366 College Avenue, (510)597-5017

For Children:

- Toddler Story Time: Saturday, 10:30am: 4/3,4/10,5/1,5/8.
- Pre-School Story Hour: Wednesday, 10:30 & 11am: 4/7,4/21,5/5.
- Pajama Story Time: Tuesday, 7pm: 4/13, 4/27,5/11.

Special Events:

- **Family Worm Composting Workshop:** Saturday, April 17, 10:30am to 12noon. For kids ages 4 – 10 and their families. Each family receives a worm bin to take home. Sign-up required. Sign-up sheet at Children's reference desk or call 597-5017.
- **Celebrate National Library Week:** Tuesday, April 20, 3;30 to 5pm. Use creative thinking and humor to play non-competitive art games. All ages; kids 7 and under must bring a grown-up. Sign-up not required.
- **Claudine Naganuma Dance Troupe:** Saturday, May 8, 2pm. Theater/dance performance in celebration of Asian & Pacific Islander Heritage Month. All ages welcome.

For Adults:

- **Lawyers in the Library:** Free legal advice. First Tuesday of each month, 6 to 8pm, (4/6, 5/4). Advance sign-up 5pm.
- **Workshop for adults:** "How to De-clutter a Room." Saturday, April 17, 2pm. Presentation by professional organizer Joan Craig. No sign-up required.

Library Hours: See box, page 2

Writer's Support/Critique Group

Rockridge Branch Library, Saturday, April 17, 1: 30 to 5pm. ALL writers welcome. Bring 8 copies of up to 5 pages of your prose for on-site reading/ discussion. California Writers Club, Berkeley branch (www.berkeleywritersclub.org/).Information: 482-0265 or Writefox@aol.com

Diesel Book/Poetry Readings

5433 College Ave. All events are FREE and open to the public.

- Sunday, 4/4, 2pm, Margo Perin, editor: *How I Learned to Cook*.
- Monday, 4/5, 7:30pm, Paul Theroux: *Dark Star Safari*. (Tickets for this event require book purchase).
- Tuesday, 4/6, 7:30pm, Rebecca Solnit: *River of Shadows*.
- Monday, 4/12, 7:30pm, Amnesty International Monthly Meeting.
- Wednesday, 4/14, 7;30pm, Michael Plitnick and Aurora Levin-Morales will answer questions about *Wrestling With Zion*.
- Thursday, 4/15, 7:30pm, Ruth Ozeki: *All Over Creation*.
- Sunday, 4/18, 2pm, Hiroko Sherwin: *Eight Million Gods and Demons*.
- Thursday, 4/27, 7:30pm, Pico Iyer: *Sun After Dark*.
- Wednesday, 4/28, 7:30pm, Co-founder of Move On, Joan Blades, and Move On representative Arthur Blaustein will discuss *Move On: 50 Ways to Love Your Country*.
- Thursday, 4/29, 7:30pm, Mylene Dressler: *The Floodmakers*.

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

Chabot Elementary School Annual Spring Auction

"Evening in Paradise" PTA fundraiser for enrichment programs: e.g. music, art, library, new on-site garden curriculum. Saturday, April 3, 6 to 11pm at Pauley Ballroom in the U.C. Berkeley student union building. Tickets: $25 in advance, $30 at the door. To donate an item or gift certificate to be auctioned or to make a cash donation, contact Susie Poncelet, 985-1246 or e-mail sponcelet@earthlink.net.

North Oakland Senior Center

5714 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. Center Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:45am to 4:45pm

- Free Tax preparation help until April 15. Call 597-5085 for appt. (between 11am and 3pm).
- Sign up for Asparagus Festival trip in April and October trip to New York to see the Lion King.

Call 597- 5085 for membership, newsletter, class or appointment times, and volunteer opportunities

Oakland Elizabeth House

Special Volunteers needed to plan for Elizabeth House 2nd Annual Art Auction and Dessert Reception, May 15. Help raise extra money for summer camp programs and move-in gifts for our families who transition into independent living facilities: 601-1213 or FranceID@oakehouse.org.

Temescal Creek Earth Day Cleanup

Saturday, April 24, starting at 9 am. Sign in at parking lot behind the DMV office. Coffee, pastries and lunch provided. See article, page 13.

Frog Park Spring Community Day Clean-up

Saturday, May 1, 9am to noon. Come to Hardy or Redondo play structures. Children welcome. Cold beverages and water provided. See article, page 7.


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