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

agenda: RCPC Town Hall Meeting

Thursday, January 19, 7:30 pm
Rockridge Branch Library, 5366 College Avenue at Manila; Community Room

- **Community Forum:** Help set Rockridge's direction for 2006. Join your neighbors as RCPC dedicates this January Town Hall meeting to hearing about the issues and projects important to Rockridge residents.

Topic: January Town Hall Meeting

RCPC Seeks Input

by Jessica Pitt, Vice-Chair, RCPC

RCPC will ring in the New Year with a Town Hall meeting to gather community input on RCPC's goals and priority projects for 2006. Please join us on Thursday, January 19 at 7:30 pm at the Rockridge Library for an open community forum where you can learn about the accomplishments of RCPC in 2005 and share your ideas about the future direction of the organization.

2005 Was Eventful for RCPC

2005 was an eventful year for RCPC. We were able to secure funding from City Councilmember Jane Brunner to install new street trees and benches along College Avenue. We strengthened our relationships with neighborhood schools. We began the design of a new website that will serve as a portal for information and news in the Rockridge community. The 2005 Kitchen Tour was a smashing success, raising $17,000 to support park and streetscape improvements, contributions to our schools, and other neighborhood projects.

Challenges

2005 was also a challenging year for RCPC. We hosted several forums intended to help form a vision for growth and development in Rockridge that could guide an update to

▸ Town Hall Meeting, page 5

Update: Crime Report

Robbery Suspect Arrested

A parolee arrested December 28 is a prime suspect in a string of street robberies in Rockridge, Elmwood and Berkeley, after publication of surveillance photos helped identify him. The suspect, a huge man who targeted mainly women, allegedly robbed eight people in a 3-day spree, December 16-19. He is also believed responsible for three robberies at the Rockridge BART station.

The High Cost of Crossing Claremont



Unable to enjoy their wide-ranging daily walks since being hit by a car on Claremont Avenue, Bob and Mary Hazen are wheelchair-bound during their convalescence. Much of the downstairs area of their home has been converted for recovery care.

Photo: Cy Gulassa

Near-Fatal Accident for Rockridge Residents

Intrepid Daily Walkers Latest Victims of Claremont Traffic

by Cy Gulassa

On a sunny morning last November, Bob and Mary Hazen began one of their marathon daily walks. "We think nothing of walking from Rockridge to Jack London Square for lunch and back," Mary says. "We even take different routes and window shop along the way."

For them, 10 or 15 miles a day is typical. Many have seen the 70-something couple strolling Rockridge streets and shopping along College Avenue, Mary always stylishly dressed, Bob in casual khakis.

When they stepped off the curb at Auburn to cross Claremont toward Safeway that morning around 10:30, heading this time for antique shopping in downtown Berkeley, the road was clear in both directions. But just as they passed the center stripe, "a car shot out from nowhere, traveling fast," Mary said. "I didn't even have time to scream. I saw that grill coming and knew this was it." A millisecond later, that BMW grill scooped both

▸ Claremont Accident, page 6

Crime Takes No Holiday in Rockridge

by Susan Montauk, Chair, Greater Rockridge NCPC

The months of November and December should be festive and hopeful, but for many Rockridge residents they were a time instilled with fear.

On November 28, violent crime struck in the normally quiet Rockridge neighborhood of Ocean View just east of Broadway. A 19-year-old student walking home from school at about 8 p.m. was forced into an alley by a man with a mallet and then repeatedly raped over a twenty-minute period. The victim found her way to a hospital and later provided a description of the rapist for the OPD sketch artist. Sgt. Rodney Grimes, the detective assigned to the case, has made no

▸ No Crime Holiday, page 4

In My Opinion

HAPPY JANUARY 1 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, INCLUSIVE

by Cy Gulassa

The war on Christmas, like the war on terrorism, is complex and exceedingly dangerous. You can banish the word Christmas with a keystroke, but semantic insurgents are deeply embedded in substitute words, ready to make a mockery of "mission accomplished."

To win the war, Christmas must be secularized, antiseptically cleansed of Christ, Christians and other religious clutter. But first, to be culturally fair, if Christmas must go, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa must also be stricken. We should not play cultural favorites.

The word Christmas, unfortunately, is problematic. Coined by Anglo-Saxons as shorthand for the feast of the birth of Christ, "Cristes mæsse" (Mass of Christ), it has burrowed so deep into our collective psyches that it's hard to find an alternative that doesn't suggest a baby in a manger and a flock of angels.

The politically correct (PC) suggest a neutral word like "holiday." That's a good choice, but it also poses problems. Holiday(s) include all 12 days of Christmas, making it difficult to single out a particular day: "Merry holiday!" "What did you get for holiday?" And how about, "Hurry, hurry, only 10 shopping days left 'til holiday." Clearly, holiday is much too generic to be useful.

Another way to test a Christmas substitute is to put it in a song or poem and listen: "On the first day of holiday my true love gave to me…." Or, "T'was the night before holiday and all through the house…." Nah!

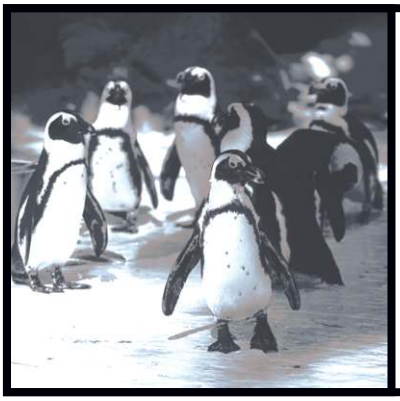
But that's only the half of it. Holiday derives from the Old English word "haligdæg," which literally means holy day, a day parishioners knocked off work but were required to attend Mass and celebrate a saint or religious event. Even though many local folks are unaware of the etymology of "holiday," it's sufficiently steeped in religious myth to offend somebody out there. Sorry, holiday must go.

I examined an old, pre-PC neutering of Christmas to determine why it failed to take hold. Orthographers a half-century ago tried crossing out the "Christ" in Christmas. Although a good start, it didn't go far enough. Xmas stirs suspicion that religious meaning has subliminally survived in the suffix, -mas, the shortened version of Mass. Further, words like Xrated, Xtreme and Xtravaganza give an unwelcome cast to Xmas, associating it, so to speak, with bad companions. So any truncation of the word is out — Xtirpated, if you like.

I thought maybe Yule might suffice. It has a nice ring: "Merry Yuletide." "Light the Yule log." "Presents all around the Yule tree." But the word is not as secular as it seems. Tracing it back to Middle English, Yule derives from "yole" which means "Christmastide." I could trace it to Old English and thence to Teutonic and beyond, but why be excessive? Yule is useless.

Will time quiet cultural misgivings? Consider the fact that many daily words are loaded to the steeple with bulky religious trash, yet we protest not. Take just one of dozens of examples:

➧ **A Merry Whatever?, page 7**



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Friday: 12 – 5:30 p.m.
Sunday: **CLOSED**
Library program 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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- 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?
- Would you like to write a letter to the Editor?

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
RCPC Voicemail: 510/644-4228

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NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING/DEADLINES

Publication date of the next issue is
☛ **February 4, 2006**
☛ **February deadline is January 19.**

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

The Zoning Counter

5646 Oak Grove Avenue

Proposal: To construct a horizontal addition to the ground floor of the existing single family residence and an upper story pop out to accomodate a new bathroom.

Applicant: Nadja Kuhner

Contact Phone Number: 510/301-8882

Owner: Nadja Kuhner

Planning Permits Required: Regular Design Review for an addition in the S-18 Zone.

Historic Status: Potential Designated Historic Property (PDHP);

Survey rating: C2+

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

320 51st Street

Proposal: Condominium conversion of a vacant exisitng four unit building.

Applicant: Boris Faybishenko

Contact Phone Number: 510/325-6744

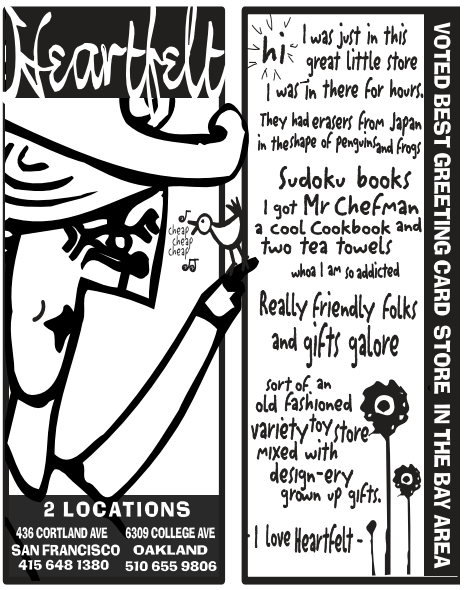
Owner: Boris Faybishenko

Planning Permits Required: Tentative Parcel Map for condominium conversion.

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

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

For the most up-to-date information about applications on file at the city, go online at www.oaklandnet.com.



What's a New Year Without Resolutions?

Location: College Avenue & 63rd Street

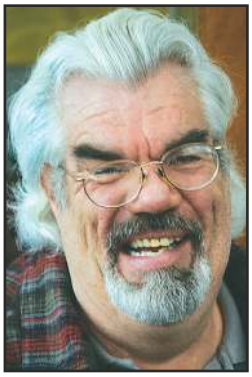


"I resolve to be a much more responsible consumer and not buy a bunch of crap that I don't need."

Cassia

"My resolution for '06 is to hit George Bush with a pie."

Joe





"My resolution is to go dancing with my beautiful girl friend as much as possible."

John

"This year I plan to lose 10 pounds."

Shamiela





"My resolution is to tap dance more."

Becky

"My resolution is to be more mysterious and be a better friend."

Hadas





"For next year I plan to stick with organic."

Chris

"I am now legal so this year I will be able to go to Puerto Rico to see my family and return legally."

Jose



No Crime Holiday

from page 1

progress tracking the assailant down as of this writing.

Burglaries and auto thefts led the crime statistics for the last months of the year (see chart below) and the Rockridge Neighborhood Watch Network subscribers grew nervous as a slew of on-line reports were made of assaults, attempted break-ins and burglaries.

- On December 5 at 7 a.m., a Rockridge resident walking up Manila from Hudson Bay Café was pushed to the ground after she refused to yield her shoulder bag to her assailant. He fled with the bag to a black Taurus parked on College Avenue.
- In mid-December when a woman walking home from BART reached the Clifton/Miles intersection, she was accosted by a youth in his late teens wearing a hooded sweatshirt. Brandishing a gun and threatening her life, he demanded her wallet. She gave him the $5 she had with her and he fled to a waiting car.
- Burglaries and attempted burglaries were not neighborhood-specific and everyone was on the alert, reporting many instances of suspicious behavior — lone men peering into windows or sitting in strange cars making phone calls. Houses on 63rd Street, Lawton Avenue, Virmar and Oak Grove were broken into through back windows and doors; burglars got away with electronic equipment and jewelry in all cases. Several attempted burglaries occurred. In one case, frustrated home owners waited hours for police to come to take the report.
- People are frightened. In late December a Chabot Road resident found a group of teens in front of his house. After an exchange of words, the kids threatened him with a baseball bat and then ran away. One frightened couple moved to another neighborhood; most are just taking extra precautions like arming themselves with pepper spray and being vigilant at all times.
- Michelle Soto, a 20-year Rockridge resident, is fed up. She wrote: "I won't walk home alone any more and I don't feel safe going for walks [with friends] either. We live in such a nice neighborhood, which we now cannot enjoy to its full extent. What a sad state of affairs."

OPD is doing its part to curb problems. On December 2, it conducted a DUI (Driving Under the Influence) check on College Avenue. No information was available regarding the results.

Hear OPD Chief Tucker and the president of the OPD officers' association at Jane Brunner's February 4 meeting. See Calendar, page 15.

2005 Crime Statistics

Type of Offense/Month	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
Aggravated Assault	1		2		3
Attempted Rape			2		2
Burglary	16	27	21	22	86
Disturbing the Peace	1		1		2
Forcible Rape			1	1	2
Narcotics				1	1
Robbery	4	4	3	10	21
Simple Assault	1	5	3	7	16
Theft	8	12	9	19	48
Vandalism	1	2	2	5	10
Vehicle Theft	12	10	21	13	56
Other	7	4	13	11	35
Grand Total	51	64	78	89	282

For an enhanced map of these statistics, go to www.rockridgencpc.com

Safety Tips:

Get a whistle from the WhistleStop program and wear it when you walk in the neighborhood. Contact Margaret at ml@chriswahlberg.com

Always conceal what you have to steal, such as money or a cell phone. Cell phones are just like cash: To be safe, treat them like cash. Don't let strangers know you have one.

Call the OPD non-emergency number, 777-3333, to report suspicious persons. The police want to hear from you, and you could prevent a crime. Provide as much information as possible, including the time you noticed the person, the clothing worn, the shoes worn, and the manner and direction in which the person walked.

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Local Schools Need You!

by Mike Taylor,
RCPC Schools Committee Chair

Community support was the focal point of a recent meeting of the RCPC Schools Committee. In attendance were representatives from North Oakland Community Charter School (NOCCS), Claremont Middle School and Emerson Elementary School. A common theme of community involvement developed as representatives from each school outlined their recent successes and ongoing needs:

- NOCCS is most in need of a new location, but also needs large-scale kitchen equipment for their hot lunch program
- Emerson would like additional help in their efforts to keep their all-volunteer library open
- Claremont stressed its goal of continuing to build involvement by parents of current and future students.

All of the schools say they have opportunities for after-school tutors. More information about all of the neighborhood schools can be found by clicking on the schools link at www.rockridge.org.





Coffee and Snacks for Temescal Creek Cleanup Volunteers

Saturday January 28: Meet at 9 am, DMV Parking Lot

Please join the DMV Neighbors beside Temescal Creek for a volunteer creek cleanup that includes weeding, raking, sweeping, pruning, cutting back the ivy from Redondo to Clifton, and bagging debris. We will meet at 9 am next to Temescal Creek in the DMV parking lot (at Claremont and Cavour) and work until noon.

The DMV Neighbors Association will provide coffee and morning snacks and the City's Public Works Environmental Services Division will supply tools, garbage bags, loppers, rakes, hoes, brooms, litter pickup sticks, and gloves. Or bring your own favorite tools, marked with your name. Wheelbarrows are always welcome.

Wear boots or shoes since it's very likely that the creek bed will be soggy. Rain cancels but not heavy fog — some of our best winter cleanups have been on gray days.

The creek cleanup is sponsored by the DMV Neighbors Association and Oakland's Environmental Services Division. Call Margaret with any questions: 655-1767. Please join us; we all appreciate a clean, pleasant park to visit.

Town Hall Meeting

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the 1994 Rockridge Area Plan. We learned that community members have strong—and sometimes conflicting—views about development in Rockridge, and that RCPC needs to engage more Rockridge residents in discussions on how we respond to and pursue development opportunities. Towards that end, we intend to undertake an extensive community planning process in 2006 that will result in an updated community plan.

A first step in that planning process is our January Town Hall meeting. This meeting is an opportunity for Rockridge residents to help us set the direction for 2006. Let us know what issues are most important to you and what kinds of projects you'd like to see us undertake in the coming year. Your input is very important to us so that together we can make Rockridge the best community possible.

Discussion Group, Anyone?

My house is cold and heating bills are skyrocketing. I'm looking to warm things up with some lively conversation. Is anyone out there interested in a non-fiction book discussion group? Or to talk about journal articles? I'm near College and Claremont. Call me at 658-4445.

— Lydia Gans

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Claremont Accident

from page 1

up, slammed them into the windshield and punted them into the air 20 feet ahead as the car skidded to a stop.

When Mary saw Bob shatter the windshield and go flying, she thought for certain he had been killed. "As I lay in the street, someone held me down, so I couldn't turn to look. All I could do was keep listening for Bob's voice—I was sure he was dead. Then I heard him and felt incredible relief. He was alive. I was alive. That's all that mattered."

The ambulance took a long time to thread its way through the Bears vs. Trojans football traffic that day. As soon as the paramedics arrived, they cut the clothes off the couple to assess injury and afterwards rushed them to Highland Hospital's trauma center.

Larry Fairbank, who runs the recycling center in the Safeway lot at Claremont, witnessed the accident. "It was like a movie stunt," he said. "I still see it in slow motion: this car shoots out of Alcatraz going fast. A loud thump, screeching brakes, and I see these people thrown up in the air like dolls and landing way down the road." Fairbank said he rushed to the man and held him down to keep him from moving. "I'm an ordained minister," he said. "As I held him, he just kept asking, was his wife okay? Over and over. I meet a lot of people in my church and I could feel this man was strong in spirit. He loved his wife. I knew he would make it okay."

Fairbank says he feels sorry for the woman driving the car, who was hysterical and screaming and saying that something distracted her. "Who knows how it happened?," he said. "There was a kid in the back seat. Maybe the child was crying and the driver turns to see if everything is okay. Or she looks over her shoulder while changing from the inside to outside lane. Or she's on a cell phone. Whatever, she didn't see them until too late." Fairbank predicts that the driver will see this scene over and over again in her mind for the rest of her life. "It haunts me," he said, "and I'm just a witness." He adds that cars frequently fail to stop when people are crossing Claremont. "They don't even slow down for them. I'm surprised nothing's done about it."

Mary was bruised, had black eyes and both of her legs were broken so badly they required metal implants of rods and pins. After several hours in surgery, she was wheeled to a hospital room to await Bob. When she worried because Bob didn't arrive until hours later, the nurse explained that the surgery team had been interrupted six times to deal with several gunshot victims. Bob sustained a serious head wound but no concussion. His right arm and leg were shattered and, like Mary's, required major metal implants; and he's still covered with bruises. Thanks to their long walks, they were in remarkable shape and that's what prevented worse injury, the doctors said.

After several days at Highland, a week in Kaiser and two weeks in convalescence, the Hazens are now back in their Rockridge home on Ivanhoe, where they have lived for nearly 30 years. The dining room has been cleared of antique furniture and two hospital beds have been installed. The living room has been rearranged to accommodate two wheelchairs, to which they'll be confined until sometime in early February.

Mary, always upbeat, feels lucky because she has the use of her arms and can wheel herself around, lift herself in and out of bed and maneuver in the bathroom. Bob, with his right leg locked in a brace and right arm immobilized, has to be assisted by

Continued top of next page



Hospital beds and comforters displace elegant dining room furniture until the Hazens recover from injuries sustained when an auto hit them as they crossed Claremont Avenue.

PHOTO: CY GULASSA

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Claremont Accident

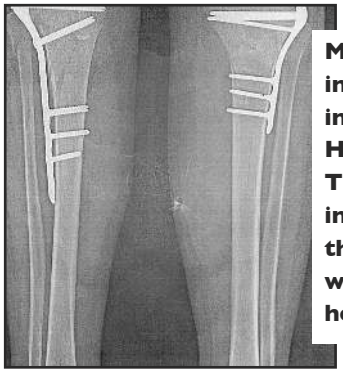
from page 6

an around-the-clock caretaker and endure another month of bedpans. "See these legs," he says. "They got more miles on them than the car in our garage. The first thing I'm gonna do when I get them back is walk down to McNally's on College and have John pour me a Guinness."

Mary says that besides the joy of walking again, she's looking forward to using her exercise equipment and playing the harp, which she used to practice every morning with her tutor. "You can't press pedals with broken legs," she says. In the evenings she watches vintage films and spends long hours reading. "I just finished McCullers' *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and I'm looking forward to *The Historian,* by Kostova. It's about vampires." Bob loses himself in the newspapers and consoles himself with a can of beer now and then. The brightest moments for both are all the friends and neighbors that stop by to visit.

Both are angry with the driver of the car, who disrupted their lives so brutally. "She should be in jail. It was a clear day, the sun was behind her, we were in the crosswalk and very visible when she hit us. There's no excuse. She just whipped around the corner and ran us down. She shouldn't be allowed to drive." The Hazens have hired a lawyer, "One of the best in Oakland," Mary says. She does the talking and Bob nods agreement. It'll be February before the two lace up their walking shoes again.

When asked why they look so happy, they both laugh. "We're just so darn thrilled to be alive together." The door bell rings. It's a neighbor carrying a lovely bouquet of roses. "Come on in," Mary says. "Ohh, those flowers are so beautiful!" Bob smiles a greeting.



Metal inserts in Mary Hazen's Tibulae immobilize the bones while they heal.

A Merry Whatever?

from page 2

The fifth day of the week, Thursday, named after Thor, the god of thunder. Despite its explicit homage to a pagan deity, no one has implored *The Rockridge News* or any other publication I'm aware of to strike "Thor" out of Thursday. The same for the rest of the days of the week. Have you ever met anyone carrying a sign demanding, "Free Friday of Freia?" In fact, few know who the pagan goddess Freia is. I'm not sure myself.

I suspect, however, that opponents of Christmas are much too impatient to wait a few thousand years for time to quench long-term associations.

So, after lengthy consideration, the most timely and politically neutral name I can think of as a substitute for Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa is December 25, as in "Happy December 25." When applied to all the 12 days of the Christmas season, this solution provides uncanny precision. Witness, "What are you doing December 25 eve?" Or "Have a great December 25 through January 1, inclusive." No confusion here.

True, it is difficult to adapt to traditional song:

I wish you a merry December 25,
I wish you a merry December 25,
I wish you a merry December 25,
And a happy January 1."

In spite of the infelicity of this rendition, I'm convinced the new system will do just fine. "Merry December 25" improves with repetition and is culturally neutral, an idyllic repose in the heavy seas of religious controversy.

I urge its adoption. In a generation or two, most everyone will regard the change as immutable tradition and bask forevermore in cultural quietude. The war on Christmas would be won definitively, and Christ and Christians banished forever. The victory could be celebrated on Armistice Day, oops, sorry: Veterans' Day, which could be renamed National November 11 Day.

I hope you all had a Merry December 25, and to everyone, Happy January 1 through December 31, inclusive.

Cy Gulassa is Editor-in-chief of *The Rockridge News*



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5387 Belgrave Pl.	3/1	$ 739,000	$ 750,000	12/8/2005
5490 Kales Ave.	4/2	$ 985,000	$ 1,050,000	12/8/2005
162 Beechwood Dr.	5/4	$ 1,999,999	$ 2,000,000	12/13/2005
4406 Clarewood Dr.	2/1	$ 650,000	$ 683,000	12/18/2005

Last year, the Rockridge Median Sales Price was $740K –
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Rockridge Cornucopia

Barry A. Kaufman

AS AMERICAN AS .....?

The scene: Your living room, where friends are deciding where to go for dinner.

"I'm in the mood for Italian. Let's try the new place reviewed in the Chron."

"Nah, we had Italian last night. What about sushi?"

"I really don't like sushi, but Chinese or Thai'll be fine."

"Mexican, anyone?"

"Hey, I've got an idea. Let's do American!"

"American? Like what?"

Although a world power, the United States does not have a national cuisine that comes close to French, Italian, Chinese, Indian, or Mexican. We don't even have a national soup like Spanish gazpacho, Italian minestrone, Vietnamese pho, or French onion. One can find Italian restaurants in Madrid, Indian restaurants in London, and Japanese restaurants in Latin American countries. But when you are in Paris, London or Moscow, American food is McDonald's or KFC.

Culinary historians keep asking, is there any authentic American food? If there is, how do we recognize it, what are its unique cultural and historical roots and most of all, is it a true cuisine? Until recently, American food and cooking has been described by food connoisseurs as bland, overcooked, underseasoned; it was canned or frozen; it was hamburgers. After purchasing the two-volume Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America, I began to understand that American cuisine is about its people. Whereas most world cuisines adhere to rigid preparations and recipes, American food has never stopped changing and this constant innovation is its hallmark. As a result, American food has been ignored by historians until recently.

Starting in the 1970s, with the advent of the American culinary revolution started by our own Alice Waters, interest in American food has become a serious matter for culinary historians and anthropologists. American cooking is the ideal expression of our revolutionary and democratic spirit. American chefs and cooks are constantly assimilating and adapting traditions from all over the world. Depending on the region of the country, there are Americanized versions of almost every ethnic food. Former *New York Times* critic Raymond Sokolov once said, "There is no such thing as American food, only food that American like to eat." Like Jewish food, American food is a special interpretation of dishes and ingredients borrowed from other people. We have New England, Southern, mid-Western, Texan and Californian cooking. But no matter where you eat, American food is about the people who prepare and eat it.

While a student at the Culinary Academy, I was required to take a course in classic French sauces. Students were not permitted to deviate from the classic recipes. I asked the instructor if I could put some additional ingredients into an aioli I was preparing. He curtly responded: "You could, but don't call it aioli!" Now, you can buy chipotle or wasabi mayonnaise at Trader Joe's, and many burger restaurants offer them as condiments. The French may have invented aioli, but it was American culinary artists who blended in traditional Mexican and Japanese condiments to create a unique addition to culinary history.

This month's recipe is a San Francisco American classic.

Joe's Special

1 pound washed and trimmed spinach
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion, chopped
½ pound ground beef
3 eggs, lightly beaten
Salt and pepper to taste

Blanch spinach in a pot of salted boiling water for 2 minutes. Drain and cool under cold running water. Squeeze out excess water and coarsely chop spinach.

Heat oil in skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions and cook until soft (10 minutes). Add beef, breaking up the meat until brown (3-4 minutes)

Add spinach, cook for 2 minutes, then add eggs and cook without stirring for 30 seconds. Remove from heat, stir, and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Barry Kaufman is a graduate of the California Culinary Academy. Barry is available for cooking classes. His email is kaufman42@earthlink.net

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Coming to Rockridge: San Francisco's Miss Millie's will soon be opening at the current location of King Shang, College near Chabot. Miss Millie's serves classic American comfort food.



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No Pot of Gold at the End of Double Rainbow

by Hiroko Kurihara

Many of you may have been surprised by the sudden closure of the Double Rainbow Ice Cream store at College and Claremont. Well, at least my kids and my 90-year old neighbor, who walked there most afternoons just for the pies, are sad to see it go.

We will sorely miss Robert Lee, the proprietor for nearly 20 years, and his staff, especially Marcos. Marcos may now have more time to study for his exams, but he's lost a perfect job that supported him while pursuing a degree in medicine (he is the first one in his family to go to college).

Living five houses down from the corner was convenient for me, for sure, but our family not only enjoyed the people and the times there, we succeeded in teaching our kids about the importance of supporting a small business owner.

The nearly $1000 per month increase in rent prompted Lee's decision to close this store as well as another in San Francisco. After nearly two decades of commuting between San Francisco, where he lives, and the Rockridge store, he is hoping for a shorter commute, affordable rent and a fresh start. Next door to the shuttered Rainbow, the rent was also a problem for the owner of the former DBA Brown record store which closed in October. Gen Ray Hair Salon will expand into its space.

These changes, along with a rumor that Starbucks was interested in Rainbow's old space, prompted me to contact one of four owners of the property, Mike Mee. Most of the owners are local. They purchased the property in 1984, not as an investment per se, but to provide office space for two of the owners who work upstairs as therapists, Mee said. He added that their general lease policy has been to keep rents below inflation rates and keep increases to incremental minimums. When a lease expires, however, new terms are negotiated. Rainbow had been paying $2,600 per month for 850 square feet of space. The terms were 5-years fixed with 1.5 to 2% increases yearly thereafter.

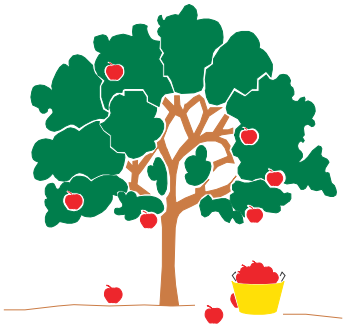
Mee says he is more interested in finding the right tenant who will support and be supported by the local community than in just getting the place rented, so no Starbucks for now. And he said he would not list the property officially until local residents or business owners had an opportunity to read this article and respond.

The Rainbow space includes one bathroom, existing refrigerators, some storage upstairs and access to shared basement storage. If you are interested, please contact Mike Mee directly at 510/841-1171 or 510/965-9698. The rent is negotiable.

The Rockridge Community Planning Council is always concerned about changes; please let us know the ideal business for this corner location: h2oakland@sbcglobal.net or 510/384-0557.

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Letters to The Editor

The Rockridge News *welcomes letters to the editor. Include your name, address and a phone number for verification. Only your name will appear with your letter. Letters may be edited for clarity and brevity.*

Beware of Telegraph and 51st Development

Editor:

You should be aware of some drastic changes that may occur in your neighborhood. I believe thoughtful real estate development can be beneficial for our neighborhood, but I am gravely concerned about a condominium complex planned for the corner of 51st and Telegraph, a 67-unit complex that would be significantly higher than zoning allows. This development will extend to Clarke St. where 39-ft. high townhouses would cut out light and increase traffic for those living in the mostly single-story homes nearby. The 65-ft. tower proposed for the corner of Telegraph and 51st would be twice the height of Global Video next door. (If planners consider 10 feet equal to one story, this project would be equivalent to 6-1/2 stories at this corner.)

This development is critical to Rockridge residents. If our Planning Commission allows this complex as proposed, the way will be paved for this developer and others to build more six-story buildings throughout the neighborhood. It is important to recognize that this developer plans to develop several properties in the Rockridge area, including the Kingfish property on Claremont. I am hoping our RCPC Council will listen and stand by the nearly 100 Rockridge residents who have signed the petition to lower the height of this development.

Growth and change is going to happen and can be wonderful for the neighborhood, but we should not accept projects where the height is out of scale with the neighborhood. Here are the reasons I believe you need to join me in telling our Planning Commission this excessively tall development cannot happen:

1. This plan exceeds zoning height allowances. If approved, it would establish a precedent for more six-story (or higher) buildings in the neighborhood.

2. This proposal goes against the city's General Plan, which states that development must be compatible with the historic fabric of its surroundings. On almost every side of this project, the proposed heights would be twice as high as anything around it.

3. A decrease in on-street parking availability resulting from occupants of this project and their guests having an adverse impact on nearby residents and local businesses.

4. While the traffic report prepared for this project concludes that the "project would not result in any significant transportation impacts," how could the additional traffic from this project not worsen the already congested nearby intersections on Telegraph, 51st St., and Claremont? Furthermore, despite the buzzwords now in popular use, there is no proof that this "transit and pedestrian-oriented" development would actually get the residents of this project out of their cars.

5. Even though the shadow study presented by the developers minimized the decrease in sunlight for those on Clarke Street, I believe the impact on those who live there will be appreciable.

6. No follow-through by the developers has been made on their stated intention to work with the community to find a solution to extending the Rockridge/Temescal Greenbelt to the corner of Telegraph and 51st Streets.

Does this development need to be so detrimental to our neighborhood? I don't think so. We should work with our local City Councilwoman, Jane Brunner, to create a long-range strategic growth plan for this area. We should not be developing our neighborhood piece by piece — making the developers rich at the expense of the qualities that contribute to our neighborhood's uniqueness and appeal.

Please speak up against this project by emailing the Planning Commissioners before they meet in January to vote on this project. Ask them to deny any request for height variances on this project: dboxer@gmail.com; mlighty@calnurses.org; nicoleyfranklin@gmail.com; mmcclure@apppliedip.com; colland@aol.com; amdge@mofo.com; suzie@yhla.net

Please copy the City Planner, Director of Planning, and our City Councilmember: DRanelletti@oaklandnet.com; ccappio@oaklandnet.com; jbrunner@oaklandnet.com.

For more information and to sign the petition, contact the Telegraph/51st Gateway Coalition at 653-7190; jnorman@california.com.

Janelle Cavanagh
Resident on Miles at Cavour







Photo: Don Kinkead

The Neighborhood Merchant

by Theresa Nelson

Sweet, Bittersweet

Imagine yourself surrounded by chocolate: luscious hot drinks blended from several different types of chocolate, melt-in-your-mouth pastries like hot chocolate cake (truly decadent) and delicious chocolate bars — more than 120 of them. Add a comfortable, warm environment with distressed redwood and fir floors, brightly colored cabinets, restored tables and chairs, plus stunning original mixed-media art and you have Bittersweet: the Chocolate Café, a rustic, cozy place to enjoy this most sensual of pleasures.

Bittersweet: the Chocolate Café opened in January 2005, in a space designed to convey the warmth of this delicious concoction. While most retail shops offering chocolate are either somewhat clinical in decor – think marble counters and white lab coats or the cherry-paneled, gold trim luxury of a Maison du Chocolat — Bittersweet aims for a feeling of comfort, a place to expand your palate without the snob quotient.

Combining chocolate and a café is a popular concept in some other parts of the world, but fairly new in the U.S. Owner Seneca Klassen noted, "With all these wonderful representatives of artisanal, varietal foods, wines, cheeses, olive oils, vegetables in the Bay Area – why not chocolate?" He said that no other store in the US combines a chocolate café, pastries and retail chocolates like Bittersweet does.

The beautiful artwork that graces the walls is by CCA graduate Sabrina Ward Harrison, whose mixed media panels were commissioned especially for the space. The murals, entitled "Spilling Open," use warm, chocolate-y colors, and include the text of a secret recipe from Francesco Redi, physician to the Medicis, who was the first to combine chocolate with jasmine. You can read parts of the recipes throughout the mural.

The partners of Bittersweet are four: Seneca Klassen, whom I interviewed (former head of an advertising firm); Bonnie Rostan (a former chef and 7th grade teacher); her sister Beth Rostan (formerly of Ask Jeeves and a college friend of Seneca's wife); and Penny Finnie (also of Ask Jeeves). The four had been on separate trips which all offered exposure to chocolate: in Provençe, Oaxaca, and Hawaii (the farthest north that chocolate can be grown). From a long dinner conversation came discussion about the possibilities of chocolate which led to the concept of Bittersweet.



Miriam, right and Jen tend to the Bittersweet Chocolate Café counters. They have good reason to smile a lot on their jobs.

Photo: Cy Gulassa

Bittersweet: the Chocolate Café

5427 College Avenue, Oakland 654-7159

http://www.bittersweetchocolatecafe.com/

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"We felt that Rockridge would be a wonderful place for Bittersweet. It's a neighborhood that fosters local businesses, and we felt the idea would fit people who live here," Seneca said. All four owners live in Berkeley and Oakland, so they knew the area well. They also said the City of Oakland was helpful to them as owners starting up a small business. While they were building the new space, they held chocolate tastings, researched recipes, refined the stock they would carry and created their secret beverage recipes.

Speaking of secret recipes: a drink called "the European" has intrigued many patrons, who wonder how Bittersweet obtains such richness in a drink without milk. "It's all in the blend," says Seneca. "To make good chocolate, you want high cacao content with lots of chocolate fat, then whip it to get air into it and enough 'mouth feel' to make it taste creamy." Perhaps you can do this at home, but then you'd miss the atmosphere of Bittersweet and the chance to browse the pastries and chocolates.

And oh, are there pastries and chocolates! Some are seasonal, like the pumpkin bread and the upcoming rolled ganache truffles and fudgy brownie dipped in 72% chocolate due in January. The pot de crème and custard for the winter will also be delicious, Seneca assures me, and perhaps a mint drink will appear on the menu as well. Their standards are items like a pear-chocolate-ginger muffin, pain au chocolate, various cookies, brownies, macaroons, brightly frosted cupcakes, and the amazing hot chocolate cake, which must be tasted to be believed. Confections are offered on the counter where you order drinks — delightful chocolates from various local makers, with interesting and exotic ingredients, an array that changes every day.

And then there are the chocolates — the wall features about 120 to 150 bars at a time, some seasonal, some available year-round. I asked Seneca to describe his favorites from each section. From the baking section, he cites the Valhrona Gastronomie Cocoa Powder, very soluble and less bitter than most. In the dark chocolate section, the Michel Cluizel Hacienda Los Ancones, from the Dominican Republic, with 67% cacao, is fruity, consistent and always pleases. For milk chocolate, he prefers the Chocolat Bonnat from France with 65% cacao from Java, which is sweet with caramel notes and a smoky undertone. In the Surprises section, he selects the flavored Vosges red Fire semisweet with a hint of cinnamon and cayenne. The white

Chocolate, page 12

Chocolate

from page 11

chocolate section has the El Rey Icoa from Venezuela, a special aromatic chocolate with a wonderful flavor.

The displays on the cabinets offer other treats. A Pierre Herme cookbook has great drink recipes and desserts, including a cold chocolate/passion-fruit concoction. The chocolate mask and chocolate body oil invite you to create your own home spa experience. And there are sauces of many flavors, tasting kits, and special cans with collections of bars ready for gift-giving. For Valentine's Day, Bittersweet will have some special confections in holiday boxes, passion fruit confections, and caramels and truffles. They also offer gift cards in any amount, and shipping as well.

An interesting chocolate fact which emerged during our conversation is that chocolate bars are very stable: their shelf life in a temperate environment can easily be several years, though with bars like these, who would ever let them last that long? Interestingly, milk chocolate is more stable than dark chocolate alone or dried milk, because of a quirk of food chemistry. So now you can stock up on good chocolate in your home emergency kits.

Seneca offered advice on doing your own chocolate tasting: "Start with the highest percentage of cacao, then clean your palate with water as you move to the less cacao percentage, sweeter chocolate." Or you can attend one of Bittersweet's monthly chocolate tastings (space is limited) to experience the breadth and depth of fine chocolates yourself. Even better, stop in any day and just experience what many people think is one of life's true pleasures: excellent chocolate in a cozy place, perhaps with a good friend. There's no better way to spend an afternoon.

East Bay Moms Host Childhood Resource Fair

East Bay Moms will host its eighth annual Preschool & Childhood Resource Fair on Saturday, January 21, 2006, from 10 am – 1 pm at the Scottish Rite Center located at 1547 Lakeside Drive at Lake Merritt in Oakland. Represntatives will describe a variety of programs available that serve children from infancy through elementary school. Phone 510/653-7867 or visit www.eastbaymoms.com

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The Rockridge Muse

by Ortrun Niesar

New Year's Wishes for the Arts

Good news! A quick review of the local arts community indicates we did better than expected in 2005 despite enormous financial pressures. Thanks one and all for your support, but we must do more to rescue and grow the arts than wish them well for the New Year. Here are a few practical suggestions:

Continue Your Open Support for the Arts

Thanks to the many who made personal commitments to sustain our local arts organizations after they lost grants and government support. Miraculously, many groups have survived and were able to create really inspired programs. Virtually all of them, however, require additional subsidies. Corporations have begun to make efforts, but the real thanks go to you, the board members, the fundraisers, the financial supporters, the volunteers. Please keep up the effort and know that many thank you in their hearts every day.

Going Shopping?

Pro Arts invites you to visit their gallery store for unique gift giving at 250 Clay Street, corner of 2nd Street in Jack London Square, across from Cost Plus.

Learn More About the Arts

Almost all major arts organizations are focusing on making the arts more accessible to the public. Art can be rich in meaning, yet to many it is an enigma. We hope that you will take advantage of the many free talks, lectures and workshops: call your favorite arts organization for details. For contemporary arts, check out programs open to the public at CCA Oakland campus (Broadway and College Avenues). If you can make it to San Francisco, the CCA Wattis Institute offers an excellent series of free lectures on a broad spectrum of contemporary arts on Tuesday evenings (call 415/551-9251 or go online at www.cca.edu).

Go Online! Please!

Yes, please do! You will never have to miss a performance again for lack of timely information, and you might eventually save a tree by helping to eliminate wasteful paper advertising. With the advent of user-friendly web programs, even small local arts organizations have their own Internet showcase. The result is rising attendance and participation. Artists, please note, Pro Arts registration for Open Studios 2006 can now be handled entirely on the Internet at a reduced cost (www.proartsgallery.org). Deadline is February 12.

Give Tech Help

Volunteer tech-assistance and newer equipment are desperately needed by many arts organizations. Improved systems would relieve the pressure on limited staff, allow better use of volunteer time and greatly increase the group's ability to serve the public. If you have access to such resources, or if your company co-sponsors such activity, please contact your favorite local nonprofit.

Think Community Center

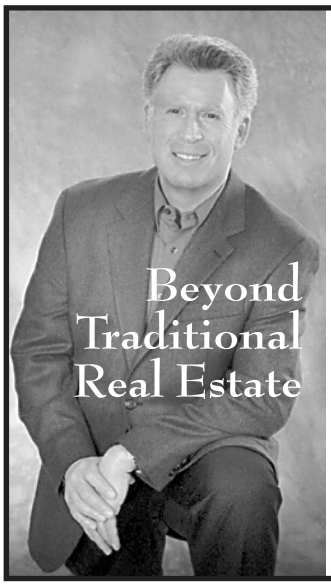
Every community should have a place where local arts can be fostered. Rockridge is in need of a center that could also function as performance and exhibition space. We are a community of 10,000 homes without a community center. The Rockridge Library, as wonderful as it is, cannot serve this purpose. Is it possible to begin a feasibility study in 2006?

Speak Out for the Arts

I was recently thrilled to hear that the Oakland Public Schools system has decided to fund a five-year program of arts for its schools. There seems to be a sudden recognition that the arts might indeed bolster learning, school attendance, self-esteem and many other good traits. Let your representatives know how much you support this kind of program.

Wishing You All a Happy New Year In The Arts!

Ortrun Niesar can be reached at oniesar@aol.com, or 652-6664. **Note**: Please send your arts events announcements for inclusion in this column at least three weeks in advance of your event.



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E-mail *Rockridge News* Community Calendar items to: joellis1@hotmail.com, phone 653-3210 (after noon), 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.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Compiled by Jo Ellis

Councilmember 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 January meeting. **February 4 meeting: Oakland Police Chief Wayne Tucker and the President of the Police Officer's union will discuss their "Vision for Policing in Oakland."** For more information on all District One issues or events, call 238-7001 or www.oaklandnet.com (the site for all City-related information).

The Greater Rockridge N'hood Crime Prevention Council

Residents and business members of NCPC's 12Y and 13X areas are invited to voice their concerns about crime and public safety. Meets 3rd Tuesday each month, 7 to 8:30pm at California College of the Arts (CCA), 5212 B'way (at College Ave.), Bldg. B-4. Directions and more information: www.rockridgencpc.com.

Rockridge Branch Library

FOR CHILDREN:

- **Toddler Story Time**: 1st and 2nd Saturdays, 10:30am: 1/7, 1/14, 2/4.
- **Pre-School Story Time**: 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 10:30am: 1/4, 1/18, 2/1.
- **Pajama Story Time**: 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 7pm: 1/10, 1/24.

SPECIAL EVENT FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES:

- **Snowflake-Making** for our windows and your own. Free materials and instructions provided for all ages. Ask at the Children's Reference Desk for materials. For more details call Erica: 597-5017.
- **Presentation by Morris Turner, cartoonist of "Wee Pals" comic strip:** In Celebration of Black History Month, he will talk about his characters and demonstrate his drawing technique. There will be a door-prize of an autographed sketch of one of his characters. All ages welcome. Saturday, February 4, from 2:30pm to 4pm.

FOR TEENS:

- **Bookwormz (Teen-Led Book Club**): last Tuesday evening of each month from 1 to 2pm. For more information and to confirm date, call Susy: 597-5017.
- **New Anime Book Club**: First meeting, Tuesday, 1/31 from 5:30 to 6:30pm, in the upstairs meeting room.

FOR ADULTS:

- **Readings by two mystery writers** from "Sisters in Crime": Faye Snowden and Camille Minichino will read from *Fatal Justice* (sequel to *The Savior*) and *The Nitrogen Murder*. Saturday, January 21, from 2pm to 4pm. Hosted by the Rockridge Library in conjunction with the American Association of University Women (AAUW).
- **Workshop on Healthcare Planning:** Joanna Smith, LCSW,MPH will discuss Advanced Directives, a healthcare planning tool which allows people to express their wishes in advance and appoint an agent to speak on their behalf if they become unable to do so. Discussion will include long-term illness, living wills and other options and healthcare choices. Tuesday, January 24, from 6:30pm to 7:30pm.
- **Indian Cooking Demonstration**: Laxmi Hiremath, chef and food writer, will show how to create delicious appetizers, side dishes and breads from her cookbook on Indian cuisine, The Dance of Spices. Saturday, January 28, from 2pm to 4pm.
- **Book Discussion**: of *The Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, in the context of the Indian Diaspora, facilitated by Professor Gautam Premnath, UCB Dept. of English. Presented as a part of the "One City, One Book" series of events. Friday, January 30, 6pm to 8pm
- **Lawyers in the Library**: Free legal advice. First Tuesday of each month: 6pm to 8pm. Advance sign-up starts 5pm.

ART EXHIBITS:

- **Gallery**: January: Karla Higgins; Mixed Media. February: Bill Kepner; BAPC Photo Group.
- **Display case**: "Season for Non-violence" display. 5366 College Avenue, 597-5017

LIBRARY HOURS:

Monday and Tuesday, 12:30 to 8pm.
Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday 10am to 5:30pm
Friday, 12 to 5:30pm
Closed Sundays.

NOTE: CLOSED MONDAY, 1/2 AND MONDAY, 1/16 (FOR MARTIN LUTHER KING'S BIRTHDAY).

Diesel Book/Poetry Events

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- Monday, 1/9, 7:30pm. **Amnesty International Meeting**; all welcome.
- Tuesday, 1/10, 7:30pm. **Book Group #3**: Discussion of *The Plot Against America* by Philip Roth. All welcome.
- Thursday, 1/12, 7:30pm. **Reading by Contributors to *Literary Mama* and *It's a Boy*.** Both are anthologies of fiction, non-fiction and poetry by women authors.
- Saturday, 1/15, 3pm. **Andy Couturier:** Writing Workshop using techniques from his book *Writing Open the Mind: Tapping the Subconscious to Free the Writing and the Writer*.
- Tuesday, 1/24, 7pm. **Book Group #1**: Discussion of *Zeno's Conscience* by Italo Svevo. All welcome

5433 College Ave. For more information about readings, book discussion groups and El Grupito, the Spanish discussion group: 510/653-9965 or www.dieselbookstore.com.

Writer's Support/Critique Group

ALL writers welcome. Bring at least 10 copies of 5 pages of your prose for on-site reading/discussion. Sponsored by the California Writers Club, Berkeley branch (www.berkeleywritersclub.org/) Rockridge Branch Library, third Saturday of the month from 1 to 5pm. For more information: 420-8775 or Writefox@aol.com.

Peralta School K'garten Events

- **Kindergarten Open House**: Meet principal and teachers. Wednesday, January 18, 6:45pm.
- **School Tours**: now available Wednesdays and Thursdays. Call 879-1450 to schedule a tour date.

To RSVP to arrange childcare for events or for more information call 655-2737. or www.geocities.com/peraltaschool/ 460 63rd Street. 879-1450.

OPEN ENROLLMENT REMINDER: Oakland Unified School District's Open Enrollment period is January 16 - 28, 2006. Contact student services at 879-8111 for exact times and location.

Temescal Creek Winter Cleanup

Join neighborhood volunteers to weed, prune, rake and bag debris from Temescal Creek. Saturday, January 28 from 9am to noon. Meet next to the creek in the DMV parking lot at Claremont and Cavour. Sponsored by the DMV Neighbors Association, who will provide coffee and morning snacks, and the City's Public Works Environmental Services Division, which will supply tools and equipment, (or you can bring your own). Cancelled only in case of rain. For more information or questions, call Margaret at 655-1767.

Sick Plant Clinic

Bring your ailing plants to the University of California Botanical Garden and **get a free diagnosis** by UC plant pathologist Dr. Robert Raabe, UC entomologist Dr. Nick Mills and their team of experts. First Saturday of every month from 9am to noon. UC Botanical Garden, 200 Centennial Drive, Berkeley (above Cal Memorial Stadium in Strawberry Canyon). For more information: 643-2755 or http://botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu.

Activities and Events for Seniors

- **COLLEGE AVENUE ADULT CENTER.** Light exercise, socializing, travel programs and music. Hot lunch at noon for $2. Every Wednesday from 9:30am to 1:30pm at College Ave. Presbyterian Church, 5955 College Ave. For details about upcoming field trips, call Kathy at 531-6724.
- **NORTH OAKLAND MULTI-PURPOSE SENIOR CENTER.** Program Highlights: Computer classes; Health Insurance counseling and advocacy program; driver safety; trips, tours and theater outings. Center Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:45am to 4:45pm. 5714 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. The newsletter, "North Oakland Senior Times" provides a full schedule of classes as well as a monthly lunch menu: (suggested donation: seniors age 60 + $2.25; $4 for those under age 60). Call 597- 5085 for details about membership, newsletter, classes/events and opportunities to become a volunteer.

Volunteers Needed

- **Second Start Adult Literacy Program:** Teach an adult to read. Free training. Nine month minimum commitment. Volunteers can meet with their students at the Rockridge Branch Library. For more information: 238-3432 or www.oaklandlibrary.org/services/SecondStart.
- **North Oakland Community Charter School (NOCCS):** Tutors to work with 1st to 5th graders, one-on-one or in small groups, on math, reading and writing skills; time commitment of at least one hour per week. Located at 410 Alcatraz Ave. (cross St. Colby). Contact Julia Kassissieh, Director: 655-0540 or director@noccs.org.
- **Friends of Temescal Creek:** Monitor water quality by collecting water samples at Temescal Lake for analysis. Important for Rockridge residents because Temescal Creek runs above ground near Frog Park. Volunteers meet on the third Saturday of each month from 10am to noon. Regular commitment preferred. For more information and for where to meet, contact Friends of Temescal Creek at fotc2005@yahoo.com.
- **HEROES**: is the volunteer placement program for the Oakland Unified School District which helps to enhance the quality of educational experiences for students in the Oakland public schools. To volunteer, call 879-2908 or www.oaklandheroes.org.

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