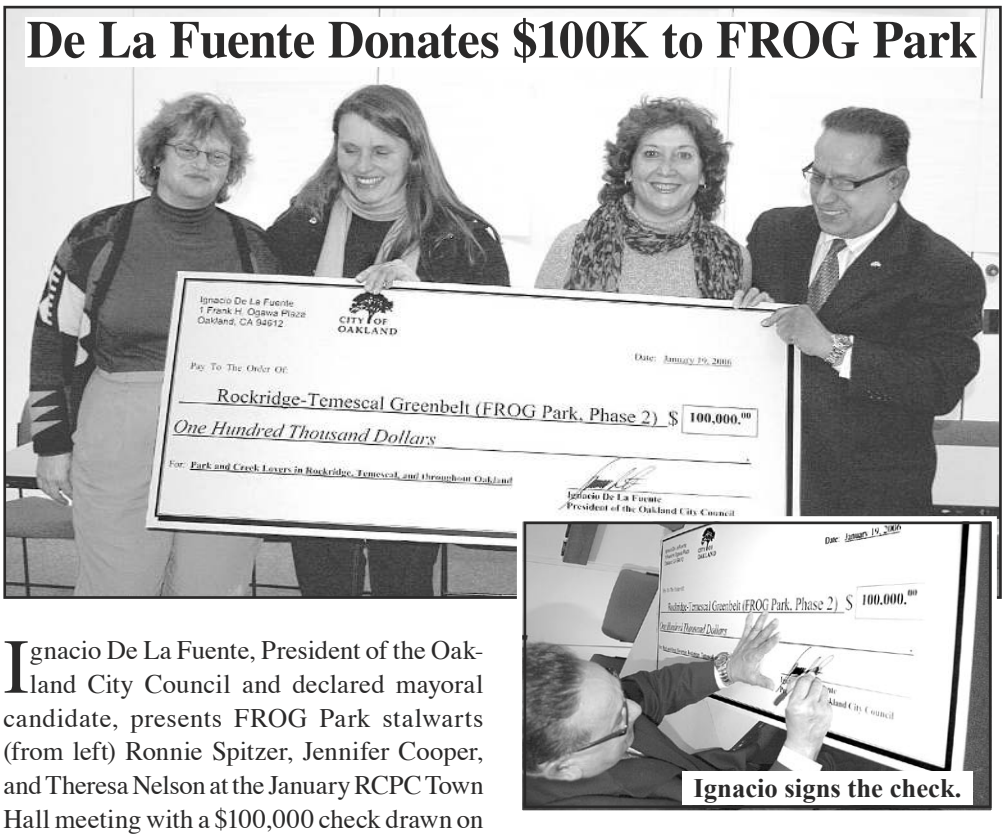
THE Rockridge News

www.rockridge.org

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De La Fuente Donates $100K to FROG Park



Ignacio signs the check.

Ignacio De La Fuente, President of the Oakland City Council and declared mayoral candidate, presents FROG Park stalwarts (from left) Ronnie Spitzer, Jennifer Cooper, and Theresa Nelson at the January RCPC Town Hall meeting with a $100,000 check drawn on his share of a community project fund. Sixty community members at the meeting enthusiastically welcomed the contribution, which will help finance the final phase of the Rockridge Greenbelt, the linear park extending from Hardy Park to Redondo Woods at Redondo and Clarke Streets. In a related matter (story, page 7), developers of the recently-aproved CiviQ project at 51st Street and Telegraph Avenue have agreed to an RCPC condition to set aside a deeded strip of land that will extend the Greenbelt to 51st and Telegraph.

RCPC Seeks Board Candidates for April Election

Looking for a way to help promote community projects that enhance the quality of life in Rockridge? Serving on the Rockridge Community Planning Council Board of Directors offers you the perfect opportunity.

Six Board vacancies will be filled by an election to be held April 20. Prospective candidates must submit a written

➧ **RCPC Call for Candidates, page 15**

■ **Rockridge Traffic and Pedestrian/ Bicycle Safety Committee**

Traffic a Priority for RCPC Committee

by Steve Meyer, Chair, RCPC Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Committee

Speeding cars… lack of crosswalks… no bicycle lanes…. Do you live on, use, or know of a street that has chronic traffic and/or pedestrian/bicycle safety issues? If so, please get involved with the Rockridge Traffic and Pedestrian/

➧ **Traffic Priority, page 12**

Residents Want Zoning Laws Preserved

Message loud and clear at Town Hall Meeting

by Jessica Pitt, RCPC Vice Chair

On January 19, RCPC held a Town Hall meeting to gather input from community members on issues they would like RCPC to focus on in the coming year. The discussion was lively and informative. Several themes emerged:

Preserving Local Zoning

Community members are very concerned about preserving existing zoning, and would like RCPC to make this a top priority. Oakland's zoning laws dictate both the density and use of buildings. For example, Rockridge has a special zoning designation for College Avenue, called C-31, which was created by Rockridge residents to preserve and enhance retail within the commercial corridor. It restricts retail use to the ground floor, with office and residential use allowed on upper floors. Zoning also limits the height of

> **"Preserve existing zoning" — *Community***

➧ **Town Hall, page 12**

NOTICE

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In My Opinion

A Word Problem: Playing Culinary Tug of War

by Natasha Ravnik

The food writer's dilemma is a Greek myth in food's clothing: The nature of the beast is one part food and the other part writing. Imagine a snakehead on a giraffe's body. Fantastical, yes, practical, no. The problem with food is that you always want to eat what you try to write about. There is a gentle tug of war between the sweet aroma of that delicious next meal and the pull of the ink to your paper. "Put the red bean bun down right now and write about it. Don't sip that coffee–look at it, stare into its frothy white oasis, capture the essence of 'X' food" you are trying to get to know. Well, by this time that dumpling you were eating is cold, the coffee beyond lukewarm, and the soup has lost its steaming. What's a food writer to do? To eat or to write about it — that is the question.

The perfect creme brulee or warm goat cheese tart is placed before your eyes and nose and you have to say, "Uh, hold that while I jot down a few notes." How insulting. But really, how else is one to do the proper job of savoring? We are faced with a word problem: a word problem about food. Conflicted, torn between the opportunity to write about food, and the nagging cries of our inner gastro-gnomes who want us to just sit down and eat!

The Gastro-Gnomical Me

My inner gastro-gnome is essentially my compass: he sits about waist high and decides what and how I like to eat. Most times I'm not even in charge. I do all his bidding. When I go to restaurants he chooses what I like to eat. My eyes make contact with the menu and *voila*, a decision is made. My inner gastro-gnome is part French and part Slovenian; how to satisfy such a disparate little gourmet? Not easy.

The French like their meals sitting down. There will be no rushing, if you please. In Slovenia, where my family is from, meals are also slow. We take our time to eat, like taking a stroll on a summer Sunday. There is no rush, no hurry. The meal is destination, process and purpose. Not something to get through. It is not fuel.

A Slovenian meal recharges. As in classic French cuisine, Slovenian food comes in a series of courses. Usually a soup is served first, followed by meat dishes, vegetables, a communal salad, and perhaps dessert or fruit. More than likely there will be coffee too, or tea, depending on the family who serves. My inner gnome really likes this — he's a gourmet. He says, "Do not rush me, I'm savoring. Get out of my way, I'm getting in touch with my inner hedonistic sensibility." A gastro-gnome is not for sport or play — eating is serious business, and he (or she) does not want distractions.

The Decibel Factor

This fall, I perused a copy of the San Francisco Chronicle's *Insider's Guide to the Top 100 Bay Area Restaurants for 2005*. In it I came across a funny phenomenon I call the decibel factor. Each restaurant has a category listing how loud, or how many decibels, it got. The rating also considered how easily you could speak to the other people at your table. I have thought about this on many occasions when deciding whether or not to go to a particular restaurant, but this category struck me. I wondered: What kind of ambiance do we choose to eat in? Are we under stress when we sit down to table? Does this affect our digestion? Does it reflect how we view the dining experience or the complex, dance-like relationship between patron and server, server and chef, chef and location?

As a rosebud of a writer in the food and cooking industry, I think a lot about such topics. I contemplate so much that my theoretical interests almost eclipse the spontaneity of eating.

So my response to my inner gastro-gnome and anyone out there listening: Take time, go to quiet places. Be with your food. Enjoy the consumption — let it consume *you*. Share the meal. Pay attention to your plate. See the healthy bond between artichoke and fig, rosemary and lamb, tangerine and jelly bean. Did they marry? Are they split up? Wine pairing gone awry? Whatever the case, savor, don't speak, write or analyze about the shrimp or apple. At least not on the first bite. Take your time, find your pleasure. Dine a lot and alone. Lower your decibels.

Sit down. Be quiet. Eat.

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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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- Would you like to write a letter to the Editor?

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

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Newsletter Advertising/Deadlines

Publication date of the next issue is

- **March 4, 2006**
- **March deadline is February 16.**

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

451-457 51st Street

Proposal: Convert an existing 4-residential apartment building into 4 condominium units.
Applicant/Owner: Michael Pitler
Contact No: 510/368-1499
Permits Required: Tentative Parcel Map to create 4 residential condominium units.
Case Planner: Jason Madani, 238-4790 or jsmadani@oaklandnet.com

5775 Broadway

Proposal: Construct an approximately 800 sq. ft., two-story addition and attached one-car garage and deck to an existing two-story, single-family dwelling.
Applicant/Owner: Henry Gutman
Contact No.: Henry Gutman 510/205-6592
Permits Required: Regular Design Review to construct a new two-story addition to an existing two-story, single-family dwelling.
Case Planner: Mike Rivera, 238-6417 or mrivera@oaklandnet.com

5617 Ocean View Drive

Proposal: Replace existing front porch and stairs at existing single family dwelling.
Owner: Leonard & Mary Ann Benson
Contact No.: Graff Architects 510/653-4500
Permits Required: Design Review and Minor Variance to allow a 7' setback where 9' minimum is required for porches.
Historic Status: Potential Designated Historic Property (PDHP);
Survey rating: C2+
Case Planner: Maurice Brenyah-Addow, 238-6342 or mbrenyah@oaklandnet.com

5432 Bryant Avenue

Proposal: Raise an existing single-family dwelling 2'-6" in height and create 850 s.f. of new floor area at the new ground floor level, rebuild exterior stairs, plus misc. window replacements and cosmetic upgrades to exterior.
Applicant: Erin Shoot, Jason Kaldis Architects, Inc.
Contact No.: 510/549-3584
Owner: Debra Lobel and Pauline Moreno
Permits Required: Residential Design Review per Section 17.136 for additions and alterations to an existing single-family dwelling, and Minor Variances to: (a), locate the rebuilt/taller front stair 2.75' from the front lot line (10.29' min. required; 6.58' existing nonconforming stair setback, and 2.75' proposed), and (b), to locate the rebuilt/taller north side stair at the north side lot line (5' min. required; 0' existing nonconforming stair setback, and 0' proposed).
Case Planner: Ann Clevenger, 238-6980 or aclevenger@oaklandnet.com

The Zoning Counter is a compilation of recent applications filed with the Oakland Planning Department. Individuals may contact the case planner or the Planning Department for additional information by phone or on-line at www.oaklandnet.com.

Dogs on Public Streets Must be Leashed

by Adrienne DeAngelo

Have you ever strolled down the block and seen an unleashed dog round the corner ahead? Perhaps you hesitated: Is this dog alone? A stray?

Then, a moment later, maybe you were relieved to see a conscientious neighbor, waste bag in hand, just a few paces behind his pet.

If you live in Rockridge, this is not an uncommon sight. Even if the dog and neighbor are friendly, it can be an uncomfortable situation.

Off leash dog walkers often believe they have their animals under control. "My dog would never hurt anyone," they say. But they could be wrong. "When I was living in Michigan," said Heidi Joshi, a former Rockridge resident who is legally blind, "my guide dog was attacked by a dog off leash, so I am very fearful of all dogs off leash. They can be unpredictable, especially when encountering something unusual, like a dog with a harness. Rockridge is a difficult place to walk with a guide dog due to the number of dogs off leash."

East Bay SPCA Director of Communications Kirsten Park agrees. "Even if your dog is in control," she says, "you can't always control other people's dogs." Park, a dog owner herself, doesn't take her dog off leash unless she's in a designated area. "I'm not willing to risk my dog running out in traffic or approaching other dogs."

While some pet owners think that a leash is detrimental to a dog's well being, Park says: "There are dogs that are on leash all their lives except when they're in their homes, and they're perfectly fine. We think it's safer for a dog to be on leash."

That said, finding ways to exercise a dog can be challenging in urban areas. Fortunately, some communities in Oakland and Berkeley have dog parks and off leash areas. Hardy Park, in Rockridge, is a fenced, off leash dog park spanning 2.16 acres along Hardy Street and Claremont Avenue. Twenty-one-acre Point Isabel Regional Shoreline, in Richmond, is one of the largest and most beautiful off leash parks in the country.



To learn more about dogs in the East Bay Regional Parks, go to www.ebparks.org and click on "dogs."

Important Oakland Ordinances All Dog Owners Should Know:

Dog License

All dogs four months or older must be licensed and wear a current license tag.

Three Dog Limit

Three dogs are allowed per household. It is unlawful for any person to keep on any one premise more than three dogs if the dogs are more than 4 months old. Exemptions: Households that have more than three dogs that are licensed by January 1, 2006 are exempt. Licensed dog kennels, etc., are exempt.

Dogs Required To Be Microchipped

All dogs over 4 months of age must be microchipped. All dogs 4 months of age and older must have a current rabies vaccination, an implanted microchip with the number registered with Oakland Animal Services, and a current license with Oakland Animal Services. Dogs that are licensed by January 1, 2006 are exempt from the microchip requirement for one year. Every stray dog that is brought to the Oakland Animal Shelter is scanned for a microchip. Dogs that have microchips can be reunited easily with their owners.

Dogs At Large

Dogs are not permitted to run at large except in designated off leash areas. They must

Leash Laws, page 12



The Nuts and Bolts of Purchasing an Alarm System

by Houston Gray

With the recent spate of neighborhood burglaries, muggings and home invasions, our fears concerning personal and home security have surfaced. An alarm system is an effective layer to your home's security; but making a wise choice among the many products on the market is difficult. It can be managed if you follow some simple guidelines.

The first three things to do are research, research, research:

■ Spend an hour surfing the Internet educating yourself on "home security tips." Take as many "security quizzes" as you can. Here are some helpful sites:

- http://dsc.discovery.com/fansites/ittakesathief/about/about.html
- www.allaroundyourhouse.org/home_security/systems
- www.nononsenseselfdefense.com/heomsecurity.html
- www3.sympatico.ca/rh.campbell

■ Invest in a book like Better Homes and Gardens' *Home Security – Your Guide To Protecting Your Family.* The information is easy to understand and even easier to implement, and most of the tips can be accomplished by the average homeowner.

■ Watch "It Takes A Thief" on the Discovery Channel, and visit their website for "tips and quizzes." I am not a fan of TV but this is an invaluable education on how a thug's mind works.

Once you have assessed your threat level, you are ready to decide between a professionally installed alarm system (PAS) and a do it yourself model (DIY). There are many viable DIY systems available that are easy to install, program and use. If you are concerned with your installation ability, you can always have the DIY system installed by a professional. In all my research, I cannot find a professionally installed system that has as many options or is as expandable as the DIY systems. Due to space constraints, the topic of DIY systems will have to be explored at a later date.



If you have decided to go with a PAS, here is a short alphabetical list of companies in the area that not only install alarm systems but also provide monitoring: ADT, Allen, Bay Alarm, Brinks, Reed Brothers and Sentry. I wish I could tell you which company is best, but every situation is unique and requires your personal input.

Before ordering an alarm, you need to take several steps to ensure you will be getting what you expect: talk with your family, friends and neighbors about their experiences with their alarm companies and check your insurance company for discounts. Visit each company's website; they often have helpful security tips, pricing sheets and answers to most of your queries. Some questions to ask: Is the system easy to use? Does it come with a maintenance plan? Does the system have a rechargeable backup battery? Is the monitoring center a UL-Listed, 24-hour monitoring center? Can the system protect against things other than burglaries, such as fire, carbon monoxide and flooding, and does it offer medical emergency and "latch key" monitoring? Do they offer a cellular back-up? How long is the monitoring contract? (I cannot confirm it, but have been told that in California the maximum is two years.) Do they offer "venting" for windows (which is a cheap alternative to most window-screen issues)?

I have three final warnings when considering an alarm system:

■ A simple system that you use is infinitely better than a complex one that you don't.

■ Baseline systems are just your starting point (two door/window and one motion sensor are not going to adequately protect your family), so expect to pay for additional sensors.

■ You should do your own research; don't rely others for your security needs. It's your family.

But don't think that that an alarm system is a final solution. Your personal and home security should be layered so that even if one layer is breached, there are several more to protect you. Be sure to assess and address all the easy-to-fix and inexpensive security breaches first. If you don't have a good Neighborhood Watch, if your yard gives good concealment and is not well lit, if your windows, doors and locks are easy to bypass, if you aren't locking your doors, windows, and vehicles, and your valuables aren't logged and secured, then no alarm system will protect you. It is relatively easy to bypass an alarm system, but it is even easier to make your property unattractive to burglars before you even consider which alarm system to use.

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North Oakland Bids Farewell to Police Lieutenant Lawrence Green

The popular cop, who created what may be the country's first citizen/police internet newsgroup, now heads OPD's traffic division

by Janet Somers

Oakland Police Lt. Lawrence Green, who three and a half years ago started an innovative Yahoo group allowing police and citizens of North Oakland to talk to each other, has left his post as North Oakland commander to head the department's traffic division and serve as one of four lieutenants on the tactical squad.

In an interview, Green said he made the job switch, widely regarded as an upward move, because he wanted a change and a new challenge. He is replaced by Lt. Jim Meeks.

Green, 45, is a 20-year OPD veteran who started as a cop on the Sonoma police force at age 19. His father, Phil Green, is Twin Cities (Larkspur/Corte Madera) police chief and his younger brother, Phil, is an OPD homicide sergeant. Green lives in Antioch with his wife, Monica, an OPD dispatcher.

During his five years in North Oakland, Green became known for re-vamping police culture here, vastly improving communication between police and residents.

"Lawrence Green did something I had never experienced with law-enforcement personnel," said Susan Montauk, chair of the Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council. "He opened up the lines of communication between the police and us, and entrusted us with information that had always been the exclusive property of police."

"He was really committed to taking care of us," City Councilmember Jane Brunner said. "He's creative, he's smart, and he does not mind rolling up his sleeves and telling the truth and getting the job done."

Green's cop/citizen newsgroup may have been the first of its kind in the country (after its success, then-Chief Richard Word called for nine more groups to cover the city). Calls three years ago by this reporter to police departments in a dozen major cities throughout the U.S. found that some had websites with crime information, but none had anything like the Yahoo group.

Green's outspokenness is legendary. "He has the ability to speak to you and tell you the truth, regardless of how it may fall," said Captain Cy Vierra, Green's supervisor for the past five years.

His philosophy of free speech permeated and facilitated communication on his newsgroup, whose current approximately 350 members include residents, cops, city officials and reporters.

"People who did not know each other, from San Pablo-Golden Gate to the Shattuck corridor to Piedmont Avenue and Rockridge, started communicating in a way they'd never connected before," said North Oakland resident Don Link, chair of the city's Community Policing Advisory Committee. "Lawrence did not squelch stuff that came on the site." Green was comfortable with the kind of "extremes" shunned by many Yahoo-group moderators, Link said. "It exposed officers participating on the site to how the people they're serving think. That's really unusual; it probably couldn't have been done any other way. A cocktail party couldn't have done it."





Lt. Lawrence Green outside police headquarters, above; with his wife, Monica, left: behind every great man there's a woman.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF JONATHAN SPRAGUE AND KATE POWERS

Green said the most satisfying aspect of the job was creating a real relationship with the community. "Law enforcement traditionally says, 'Police work is our business, not yours,'" he said. "'We're the experts,' bla bla bla. Whereas I want more of a real partnership and a real exchange of information.

"I tried to make big-city cops interact with people like smalltown cops. I'd say (to officers), 'I don't like officious cops. You need to be concerned about the issues, you need to be personable and real with people you deal with.' The ones who didn't get it, I would try to discourage from re-applying to North Oakland."

Community response provided reinforcement, he said. "When, say, (Officer) Robyn Clark is doing all this extra stuff and being this real approachable kind of a beat cop, the community is thanking her and appreciating her. And so it's sort of like this natural kind of buy-in. I think over time, the citizens of North Oakland became more and more supportive of police in general."

Sgt Darren Allison worked for Green for three years on the Crime Reduction Team, focusing on crimes like narcotics and prostitution. "He wasn't afraid to go out on the street and work with us," Allison said, adding that Green would also frequently give patrol officers a break by working their beats for them.

Green has already sent an e-mail to the Yahoo group he created, asking for neighborhood traffic priorities.

"I'm following in the footsteps of one of the best commanders of OPD, (former traffic) Lt. Dave Kozicki," he said during the interview. "So I'm coming into an operation that's running pretty well. But I'd still like to make it even more responsive, more community-based."

For information on a farewell party for Lawrence Green, e-mail Don Link at donlink@jps.net.

Brunner Says, "Have a Seat, Rockridge!"

by Justin Horner, Chief of Staff for Councilmember Jane Brunner, and Dan Ferdelman, Former RCPC Boardrmember

In 2003, then-Vice Mayor Jane Brunner launched her "Livable Communities" initiative. Visiting the leaders of each North Oakland neighborhood, she asked them to prioritize improvements that would enhance the livability and walkability of their communities.

When she visited RCPC, Brunner focused on making College Avenue even better by providing places for people to sit and rest and by "greening" the street with more trees.



Street bench set for installation on College Avenue. Photo: Dan Ferdelman

Over the past 12 months, RCPC and the Rockridge District Association (RDA) have worked with Brunner to create a capital-improvements plan for College Avenue that calls for 50 new street trees and 100 new custom benches, all paid for by Brunner's special development fund.

City Tree Supervisor Dan Gallagher has approved the new tree locations and recommends planting flowering apricot pear trees.

Former RCPC Boardmember Dan Ferdelman and current Boardmember Mike McDonald spearheaded the bench project in 2005 when they began working with Oakland's IGR Design, which completed a design for the bench and built a prototype. The design, according to Ferdelman, "is unique, versatile, easy to install in varying sidewalk conditions, and built for the urban environment; in other words, it's beautiful AND tough!"

The benches, inspired by those installed along Market Hall frontage on Shafter Avenue, are made of beefy, powder-coated steel and sustainably-harvested IPÊ, a Brazilian hardwood (pronounced *ee-pay*). Built locally and designed for installation near and around street trees, they will serve simultaneously as sitting "perches" for pedestrians and as tree protective barriers.

Tree planting and bench installation are scheduled to begin in the early part of this year.

Bart to Charge $1 Parking Fee at Rockridge Station

Beginning January 30, 2006, BART will charge a $1 daily parking fee at the Rockridge BART station, according to information from the transit agency. The program will also be implemented at BART's 10 busiest East Bay stations over a six-month period. Payment will be required on weekdays between 4 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Signs have been installed designating Permit Parking and Fee Parking areas at the Rockridge station. The permit area is restricted to customers with monthly reserved, single-day reserved or airport/long-term reserved permits until 10 a.m. After 10 a.m., any available space becomes a daily paid space.

For awhile, BART staff will be at the Rockridge BART station to make customers aware of the parking charges. BART police will issue warnings for a limited time after charges begin. Following this grace period, violators will be subject to a $25 fine.

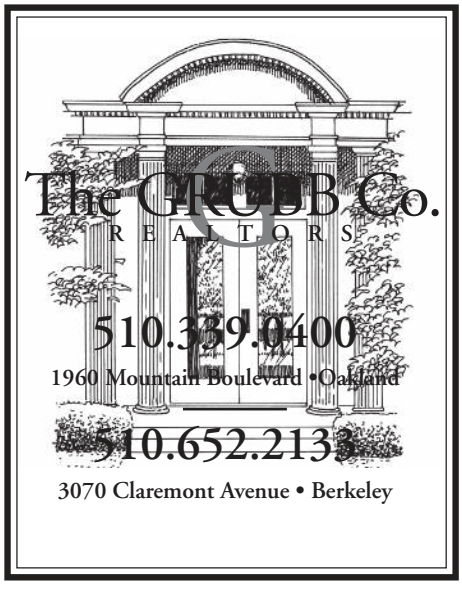
Call BART Parking Division Manager Kevin Hagerty at 510/464-6196 with questions. Also, check BART's website at www.bart.gov for more complete information.

Other BART Parking Options

Single Day Reserved: The cost is $4.50 per day. As many as 10 single day reserved permits may be purchased at one time.
Monthly Reserved: Purchase a monthly permit online at www.bart.gov.
Parking Policies: There is a 24-hour time limit at all BART lots unless a long-term parking permit is purchased. Violators of this or any other BART parking policy will be fined $25.

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Planners Approve CiviQ Project at 51st Street and Telegraph Avenue

by Hiroko Kurihara, Chair, RCPC Land Use Committee

On January 18, the Oakland Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve the 67-unit, mixed-use market rate development proposed for the former Pussycat Theater site at the corner of 51st Street and Telegraph Avenue.

Several RCPC representatives attended the hearing to present the Board's position (a copy of our letter to the Commission is posted on www.rockridge.org under "Land Use"). A considerable number of Temescal and Rockridge neighbors also attended, many of whom were opposed to the project, and, in particular, to the proposed height of an architectural element (65 feet) at the corner of 51st and Telegraph.

RCPC's Board of Directors had voted to "not oppose" the project if certain conditions were met. Although the project is largely outside the RCPC boundary, the Board chose to comment on this project for several reasons: 1) one side of the project, along Clarke Street, abuts the RCPC boundary; 2) the community's vision included an extension of the FROG Park Greenbelt; 3) the same developers plan additional projects along Claremont Avenue and around the Kingfish Pub; and 4) a project of this scope, in this gateway location, affects Rockridge. RCPC registered its disagreement with the practice of granting variances from the zoning ordinances' height and other restrictions, in cases of non-necessity, but did not take any further position on the appropriate height of the element at 51st and Telegraph.



Two site plan versions for the CiviQ project. Top: Existing site plan. Left: Proposed alternate.

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE DEVELOPERS

RCPC's approach on this project was evolved through a series of community meetings, partly facilitated by Councilmember Jane Brunner, and through discussions with the developers of the project, Roy Alper and Ron Kriss.

RCPC's non-opposition was conditional and required that several community benefits be incorporated. They include: 1) the creation of a direct path through the site as an extension of the FROG Park greenbelt, with guaranteed public access; 2) the lowering and redesign of the Clarke Street buildings; and 3) that the developers solve certain traffic impact and pedestrian safety issues.

The Planning Commission Incorporated the above RCPC conditions, and added further conditions, on the motion of Commissioner Michael Lighty, including: 1) that the pathway along the northwest portion of the site be deeded to the City to guarantee public access through the site in perpetuity; 2) that the monies from liens on the property be redirected and specifically targeted to public improvements in and around the site; 3) that the developers meet their self-imposed, community driven, affordable housing goal of making 25% of the units available to households or families earning 80% of the median income (in Oakland that would be $32,044 or $35,507, respectively); and 4) that the final landscaping and design of the greenbelt extension walkway be brought to the FROG Park Committee for review prior to submittal to the City.

The project stands as an example of how developers working together with groups and individuals from the community, can Improve the quality of development proposals within neighborhood commercial districts. The process that was followed in this case provides an important model for future Oakland development projects.



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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.

Hang Up and Drive!

Editor:

"Who knows how it happened?" said a witness to an auto accident that crippled two elders as they walked across Claremont Avenue, according to "The High Cost of Crossing Claremont," *Rockridge News*, January. The witness said that the driver of the BMW was "distracted" and he speculated that the driver might have been "on a cell phone."

Reading this I felt my blood boil again about the self-centeredness and insensitivity of cell phone drivers. Driving a car is the most dangerous thing most of us do. Over 40,000 people are killed annually on the roads of this country and the number increases yearly.

Harvard University published a study estimating 2,600 traffic deaths annually are caused by cell phone drivers, and another study by Utah University "concluded that talking on a cell phone is *more dangerous than driving with a blood-alcohol level at the legally intoxicated threshold*" (Italics mine). The article also pointed out that "hands free" devices do not make any difference.

I just wish people, if they need to make a phone call and drive somewhere, would just choose one and forgo the other. Otherwise they could find themselves "hysterical and screaming" like the driver of the BMW did after her car scooped both of the pedestrians up, "slammed them into the windshield and punted them into the air 20 feet ahead."

Hang up and drive. Please.

Andy Couturier

Noise Pollution

Editor:

So now all of us property owners are millionaires or close to it. What good is that if the quality of our lives is "el stinko" from dogs yelping while their owners are gone and unrelenting construction noise?

Diane Latko

Community Benefits of 51st Street Project

Editor:

A letter to the editor criticizing the 51st street project in the January issue of *The Rockridge News* contained misstatements about the project and the development group. Here are a few of the project benefits, several of which are the direct result of community input.

- Extension of FROG Park Greenbelt: The greenbelt will be extended directly to 51st Street from its current terminus at Redondo and Clarke.
- Affordable Housing: The developers are negotiating with three non-profit agencies to arrange mortgage packages to meet a target of 25% of the units at the project being affordable to people earning 80% or less of the median income.
- Gathering Place: The project contains open space in excess of City requirements, including a central courtyard area and 2 public plazas.
- Temescal Creek: The new plaza at the corner of 51st and Telegraph will be designed to recognize that Temescal Creek flows below it.
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Friendly: The garage will contain secure bicycle parking and the entire design of the project is intended to encourage walking.
- City CarShare: A Memorandum of Understanding has been executed with City CarShare to create space for 2 CarShare vehicles at the site.
- Underground parking: The project meets all City parking requirements and has placed all spaces underground.
- Abundant landscaping: The entire perimeter of the project along Clarke and 51st Streets will be extensively landscaped and lit with pedestrian level lighting. The project's landscaping plan includes twice as many trees as the City would require.
- Environmental responsibility: The project will set a new standard for sustainable development in multi-family projects in the Bay Area. It will have the highest contribution from solar thermal and electric sources; initial engineering estimates exceed 70%.
- Economic development:

The project will provide a large

Letters Continued page 13



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Photo: Don Kinkead

The Neighborhood Merchant

by Theresa Nelson

Viva la Diva!

Viva Diva is the kind of place where a girl can enjoy being a girl. Surrounded by smart feminine wear and accessories, she can have a great time exploring on her own or with a group of friends. The pale walls and sleek wood floors form the perfect setting for a grand shopping experience.

Co-owner Laurie Lion said that the concept of Viva Diva is "a very girly kind of women's contemporary clothing store, with a lot of emphasis on fit and showing off how unique and terrific each woman is." The shop focuses on moderately priced clothing and great customer service, which is what Laurie feels sets them apart. "We like to make women feel at home. With a girlfriendly vibe, we take time to work with each customer to learn how she sees herself, what makes her feel good, what she likes. We want to help her feel as wonderful as she truly is," she said.

Viva Diva opened in May 2005, and it's actually Laurie's first and partner Amy Anderson's second boutique. Laurie, who lives nearby, graduated from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising San Francisco campus, which is what brought her out from the Midwest eight years ago. She joined Amy at the San Rafael store four years ago as a buyer, and since Laurie always wanted to open her own store, they decided to open a second store together in 2003. "We researched for a long time to find a location where what we do would be unique. I always loved Oakland, and the first time we came to Rockridge we fell in love with it and discovered this great place for the store."

For clothing stores, this time of year is a time of transition to the next season. Coming in for spring is a new wave of dresses, which Laurie sees as really coming back very strongly. There are dressy silk chiffon dresses from BCBG for events like weddings and garden parties in luscious colors – a blue and brown flower print halter dress is one stunning example. New for spring are lines from Velvet and Anna Paul in modal cotton, a softer, slinkier fabric that's stretchy like a synthetic but has the comfort of cotton and the luxurious feel of silk. Modal cotton is very versatile, and works in many office settings or at casual social events. Then there's a pima cotton Velvet-tees strapless sheathed with ruched sides and an asymmetrical skirt, just waiting for a night on the town. And for more casual wear, Splendid offers some lovely simple dresses and pairings of tops and pants to go with your favorite sandals.

Laurie said that denim remains very big right now, and in fact you'll see denim on each rack of similar-colored fashions. Viva Diva offers a very select group of denims, including: Seven for All Mankind, True Religion, Paige Premium (her personal favorite, created by a former fitting model), Joe's Jeans, Peoples Liberation (with signature star buttons and pockets), and the new Robins jeans, a rock-and-roll style. There are many options, and Laurie said she and Amy ask customers a lot of questions to find the exact jeans for each individual.

Tops for spring will bring new styles as well, like colorful kimono styles in silk and chiffon by Single and Anna Paul. A Godis sparkly-orange wrap sweater-vest looks stunning over a simple white tank dress. They also carry casual t-shirts "with a twist," made of very soft Pima cotton, from Velvet and Splendid. Sworn Virgin is a new line of feminine, drapy cotton tops from a partnership between a female fashion designer and a male textile designer. The firm has an environmental focus, so everything can be washed (no dry cleaning involved), and 10% of the firm's profits go to animal rights charities. Laurie said, "It's not easy to find clothing that does something positive for the world while offering a product that is beautiful and exciting. This firm does it."

Viva Diva also offers lovely accessories including belts, bracelets and jewelry from designers in Los Angeles, New York and Oregon.

Laurie is "heads over heels in love with Rockridge. I've met the most wonderful people here; there's so much community involvement and support here, which we felt from the first day we opened. My appreciation for Rockridge grows every day, and we are so happy to be here." So stop by Viva Diva, say hello to Laurie, and enjoy beautiful clothes and great service in a friendly environment.

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Classified Ads continued next column

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THE Rockridge MUSE

by Ortrun Niesar

Love

It's February and love is in the air. Per the centuries old St. Valentine tradition, you are free to say "I love you" or "I like you" to total strangers and get away with it. The shops are full of smooches packed in greeting cards, chocolates, and flowers galore, and certainly millions of e-kisses will be sent around the world. Worried that you might not get noticed by that special someone amidst this flurry of Valentine sentiment? How about this novel idea: go retro, young man, send your love a handwritten note! I guarantee that your letter will rise to the top of the heap.

Does anybody really still write notes with pen and ink? Didn't that practice go out with penmanship class? It's slow and laborious, not exactly easy if you are not used to doing it. But, for the words that matter most, there really is no substitute for sending them in your own handwriting on a well chosen paper, in a lovely envelope, by the slow moving U.S. mail. There is a lovely little book written by Margaret Shepherd entitled *The Art of the Handwritten Note, a Guide to Reclaiming Civilized Communication*. In it you will find help and motivation for getting back into the practice of expressing your deepest thoughts and feelings in this personal way. Discover the joy of holding a beautiful pen, feeling the texture of gorgeous paper, crafting lines of true meaning for those who matter most in your life. If all of this is too much to take on at the spur of the moment, Ms. Shepherd absolutely insists that you add at least a sentence or two in your own handwriting to a printed card. Also, seek out unique handmade cards available from many of our local artists. That would be a nice alternative.

Call for Entry

Love is never far removed from war, it seems (witness the history of St. Valentine's Day, which dates back to third-century Roman wars), and war is equally hard to forget. The Korean War occurred half a century ago, but it still lives on in the hearts and minds of those who survived this fiasco. Beginning March 9, an exhibition entitled "**Still Present Pasts**," exploring the legacies of the Korean War through the works of Korean-American artists, will take place at Oakland's Pro Arts Gallery (510/763-4361). This will be an interactive exhibition evolving through audience participation, oral histories, written text, etc. Note: In conjunction with the exhibit there is an open FREE call for entry for "Project: Catch 22." This is an invitation to all artists of any age to contribute their own visual war histories and attitudes toward military conflict. Works are to be submitted on paper, flat, unframed and measuring 8.5" by 11". For complete details, please go online to www.proartsgallery.com. Deadline for submissions is February 18.

East Bay Open Studios 2006 (EBOS)

The registration deadline is February 12. You can register online for a reduced fee. Go to www.proartsgallery.com for entry information and a complete list of related arts events. Open Studios takes place the first and second weekends in June.

Rockridge Photography Show 2006?

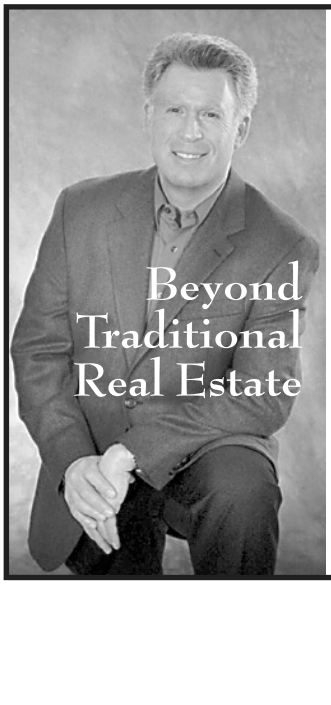
The annual Rockridge Photography show is in limbo at the moment. Unfortunately, the Rockridge Library exhibition space will not be available to our photographers this year. If you can think of a suitable exhibition space, please contact me (510/652-6664, oniesar@aol.com.) We haven't given up by any means. Interested photographers: Please do get in touch with us as soon as possible. Traditionally, the exhibit takes place in October. Thank you.

Arts Learning In Our Schools

For those who inquired last month about the arts learning program in our schools, please contact Alameda County Teaching and Coaching Exchange for Arts Educators, Liz Lindsley 510/452-0990 or Lindsley@cruzio.com. The next meeting of the exchange will be held February 16 at the Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA).

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Traffic Priority

from page 1

Bicycle Safety Committee to help to promote and enhance the safety of pedestrians and bicycle riders in our community.

This committee addresses concerns related to pedestrian safety and bicycle/vehicle traffic in Rockridge by facilitating communication and planning between the Rockridge residents and the City of Oakland, and ensures that the resulting plans are implemented. Monthly meetings begin on March 8, 7 pm at the Rockridge Library community meeting room.

A Yahoo Group has been created as a forum for residents to identify problems, share ideas and concerns, and facilitate communication with the City of Oakland and other resources. To join this group, send an e-mail to Rockridge_Traffic_and_Pedestrian_Bicycle_Safety-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Include your name and address, and note specific areas of concern.

A sub-project of this committee, the Upper Broadway project, is meeting on February 8 at 7 pm at the Rockridge Library. Jason Patton, from the Oakland Planning and Zoning Division, will present Bicycle Master Plan updates and discuss possible ways to combine efforts with the traffic and pedestrian/bicycle safety planning already underway for Upper Broadway.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Steve Meyer, Chair, RCPC Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Committee, at meyer770@sbcglobal.net.

Town Hall

from page 1

buildings in different areas throughout the neighborhood. Attendees were concerned that increasingly, the City's General Plan (a policy statement that lays out desired land uses neighborhood-by-neighborhood) has conflicted with zoning laws and taken precedence over them.

Traffic & Pedestrian Safety

Community members are very concerned about how to make Rockridge a more pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. In particular, they identified a number of dangerous streets and intersections throughout the neighborhood, including: 1) Colby Street; 2) Patton Street by Chabot School; 3) several spots along Claremont Avenue; 4) Hudson Street at Shafter; and 5) the intersection of College and Broadway.

Community Center

Attendees noted that Rockridge lacks an easily accessible community gathering space where meetings, events, and celebrations could be held.

The RCPC Board of Directors will meet in early March to develop our strategic plan for 2006. We greatly value the input of the community and will incorporate these suggestions into our priorities for the coming year. If you have ideas to share with us, please call 510/869-4200 (the new RCPC phone number).

Leash Laws

from page 3

be kept confined to an owner's yard or under leash control. Except in the case of a "seeing eye dog," a "signal dog," a "service dog," or a police dog, it is unlawful for any person owning or having in charge, care, control, or custody any dog, to cause, allow or permit such dog, whether licensed or unlicensed, on or upon any public street, alley or other public place, unless such dog be kept securely confined by a rope, chain or other leash not over six feet in length securely and continuously held by a competent person, or to permit whether willfully or through failure to exercise due care or control, any such dogs to commit any nuisance on any property other than the street gutters outside of pedestrian ways or on any improved private property other than that of the owner or persons having charge, care, control or custody of such dog.

Dogs at Large in Parks

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Chabot Elementary Plans Spring Auction Fundraiser

Join the Anthony Chabot Elementary School Parent-Teacher Association for our annual Spring Auction fund-raiser on Saturday, March 25, from 6 to 11 p.m.

To be held at U.C. Berkeley's Pauley Ballroom, this year's "Brazilian Carnaval" promises a wonderful evening of fine food, drinks, good company, live music, a live auction and, of course, the silent auction. Wonderful prizes await those who attend, including donations from local merchants and custom events such as dinners and parties.

The auction is Chabot's biggest fundraiser; all proceeds support the school's enrichment programs, including music, art, library resources, a computer-education program and an on-site garden curriculum. The PTA also contributes to improvements in the physical plant.

Chabot is the local elementary school in Rockridge and is one of the reasons this neighborhood is so desirable. We have a fabulous principal, wonderful teachers and a curriculum that rivals any private school's. Because the city and state have cut education spending drastically, we rely on our local community more than ever.

Contact Susie Poncelet to donate (e.g., auction items, a gift certificate or a cash contribution), or to purchase advertising space in our catalogue. Donors will be highlighted in our auction program and on our website (www.chabotelementary.org).

Tickets are $26 in advance and $30 at the door. Purchase advance tickets online at www.chabotelementary.org. For more information, contact Susie Poncelet, 510/985-1246, or email at sponcelet@earthlink.net.



Letters to The Editor

Continued from page 13

new property tax base for the County and transfer tax base for the City. Approximately 125 new residents at the project will provide an enhanced economic base for Temescal and Rockridge small businesses.

Bill Lambert, Shasta Productions; Project Management, CiviQ

Appalled by Development Size

Editor:

We are appalled at the dimensions of the proposed development at Telegraph Avenue and 51st Street. This is a historic corner, important to the fabric and life of our city, and to impose such a monstrous, post-modern project on our neighborhood is to rend that fabric and do a disservice to us. The project is unaesthetic and out of scale, would exponentially increase automobile traffic and suck up parking spaces, and will cause irreparable harm to the character and quality of life for those of us who live in and use this neighborhood.

As our public servants, please do not inflict this upon us.

Bill and Cynthia Tilden

Police Trap at BART Bus Stops

Editor:

This is a reminder to residents not to pick up or drop off BART passengers on College Avenue in the area reserved for busses. An Alameda County Sheriff's car will pounce on you and write a ticket with a $250 fine. There is a "No stopping" sign posted, but it's not very visible and it's not clear where the proper place for dropping off passengers is. I saw it happen again last week when I came home on BART and was leaving the Rockridge station. Several folks, including myself, talked at length to the cop after he gave the ticket, to no avail. It's going to keep happening unless folks are made aware of the trap. Also the signs should be more prominent with the amount of the fine posted on them.

Joan Sautter



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Lillian Wamalwa Injured

by Dawn Hall

My store manager, Lillian Wamalwa, was in an auto accident recently in Kenya. She will be in the hospital for at least four weeks recovering from a fractured pelvis and a dislocated shoulder, but she is expected to fully recover. Lillian, well-known and loved by many, was the owner of Lillian's children's store and has been in the community for 30 years. I'm sure a lot of people would like to know what happened and that she will be all right and is being well cared for in a private hospital. She could use the well wishes and prayers of the community. For more information, call Dawn Hall at Child's Play, 510/653-3989 or email shaina@mac.com.


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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 March meeting**. For meeting changes, or 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: 2/4, 2/11.
- **Pre-School Story Time:** 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 10:30am: 2/15, 3/1.
- **Pajama Story Time:** 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 7pm: 2/14, 2/28 (see special event below on 2/28).

Special Event for Kids and Families:

- **Make Hand-made Valentines:** free, unique and more fun than store-bought. All supplies provided, but feel free to bring any patterned paper you want to recycle. Friday, February 10, from 3:30 to 5pm.
- **Kalimba Music:** In celebration of African-American History Month, Carl Winters, "the Kalimba King," will perform African and American music on the African thumb-piano. Learn the history of the kalimba and join in with dancing, singing and chanting. Free, for all ages. Tuesday, February 28, at 7pm.

For Teens:

- **Bookwormz** (Teen-Led Book Club): third Saturday of each month (2/18) from 1 to 2pm. For more information and to confirm date, call Susy: 597-5017.
- **New Anime Book Club:** discussion of Eyre Affair by Jasper Fforde. Tuesday, February 14, from 5:30 to 6:30pm, in the upstairs meeting room.

For Adults:

- **Knitting Classes for Seniors** (50+): All levels welcome. If you are a beginner, bring light color yarn and a pair of size 8 needles. If experienced, bring projects to work on. Tuesdays from February 7 through March 28, 12:30 to 2:30pm. Instructor is Teri Barr. Register at first class.
- **Lawyers in the Library:** Free legal advice. First Tuesday of each month: 6pm to 8pm. Advance sign-up starts 5pm.

Art Exhibits:

- For information on Gallery and Display Case exhibits, call the Library at 597-5017.

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 Mondays, 2/13 and 2/20.

Diesel Book/Poetry Events

All events are FREE and open to the public

- Sunday, 2/5, 3pm. **writing class presented by Renee Swindle**. All welcome.
- Sunday, 2/12, 3pm. **David Hoobler:** *Zonk the Dreaming Tortoise*.
- Tuesday, 2/14, 7:30pm. **Book Group #3:** Discussion of *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri. All welcome.
- Tuesday, 2/21, 7pm. Book Club #1: Discussion of the 1st half of *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville. 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.

Writers 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.

Chabot Elementary School Annual Spring Auction

The fundraiser for enrichment programs will be held at Pauley Ballroom on the UC Campus on Saturday, March 25, from 6 to 11pm. **Donations are needed now:** e.g., items to be auctioned, gift certificates, cash contributions or purchasing of advertising space in the Auction Catalogue. Donors will be highlighted in the program and on our website. To make donations, purchase advance tickets, or for more information, contact Susie Poncelet at 985-1246, or sponcelet@earthlink.net or www.chabotelementary.org.

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. No registration necessary. 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. 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 and 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

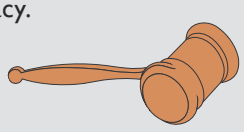
- **Second Start Adult Literacy Program**: Teach an adult to read. Free training. Nine month minimum commitment. Volunteers can meet with their students at the Rockridge Branch Library. For more information: 238-3432 or www.oaklandlibrary.org/services/SecondStart.
- **North Oakland Community Charter 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.

RCPC Call for Candidates

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statement of 125 words explaining their interest in being on the Board, be a citizen 18 years or older, and live in Rockridge within RCPC boundaries (see www.rockridge.org for boundaries). Statements must include your full name and address. E-mail statements and a photo (head shot, please) to RCPC Chair Deborah Weinstein at deborahlweinstein@yahoo.com or mail them to RCPC, 5245 College Avenue PMB 311, Oakland, CA 94618 by March 23.

Statements will be published in the April issue of *The Rockridge News*. Candidates will be introduced at the April 20 RCPC Town Hall meeting, 7 pm at the Rockridge Library and will have two minutes to speak about their candidacy.



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