THE Rockridge News
20th Year
www.rockridge.org
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January Town Hall Meeting to Focus on Planning

RCPC Town Hall Meeting Agenda:

Thursday, January 18, 7:30 p.m., Rockridge Branch Library, 5366 College Avenue at Manila, Community Room (Upstairs)

- **Your views on board priorities for 2007**
- **RCPC committees**
- **Under-BART improvement**
- **Redesigned website**
- **Capital improvements campaign**

by Jessica Pitt, Chair, RCPC

The Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) holds its third annual community planning meeting on Thursday, January 18, at 7:30 p.m. in the Rockridge Library. The meeting will provide an opportunity for Rockridge residents to express views on what the board's priorities ought to be for the coming year. The community's suggestions will be incorporated into RCPC's annual strategic plan at its retreat in late January.

The meeting will also be an opportunity to inform community members about the work of RCPC's committees over the past year, including important developments concerning traffic and pedestrian safety, plans for improving the under-BART area, and efforts to redesign the RCPC website to make it a valuable portal for information, news, and activities in Rockridge.

In 2007, RCPC plans to launch a new capital improvements campaign, with the goal of investing small amounts of money in capital improvement projects around the neighborhood, such as helping restore the pillars at the entrance to Birch Court. Funds will be earmarked for small projects which enhance the character of Rockridge. Please come with your ideas and suggestions for capital improvement projects of neighborhood importance that RCPC might take on. We will incorporate as many as we can into our annual budget.

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Assemblyman: Restore Local Control to Oakland Schools

Assembly bill seeks to limit state oversight

by Kerry Hamill,
North Oakland School Board Member

Oakland's new state Assembly member, Sandre Swanson, will likely spark some long overdue discussions in Sacramento this year about the future governance of Oakland public schools. On Swanson's first day as a member of the Oakland delegation, he introduced a bill which would put the school board back in control and protect the district's students from any risky financial decisions by keeping budget veto power in the hands of a state-designated trustee.

If passed, the bill would allow the school board to resume power in 2008 and select a new superintendent. To that end, current state administrator Kimberly Statham will likely be on a short list of possible candidates. She continues to earn high marks in the school community for her ability to listen, accept good advice and embrace changes that have worked well for students.

Central to any discussion about restoring local governance is how to continue the momentum for improving academic performance. Since 1999, when organized groups of parents from Oakland's lowest performing schools banded together to demand change, student achievement has

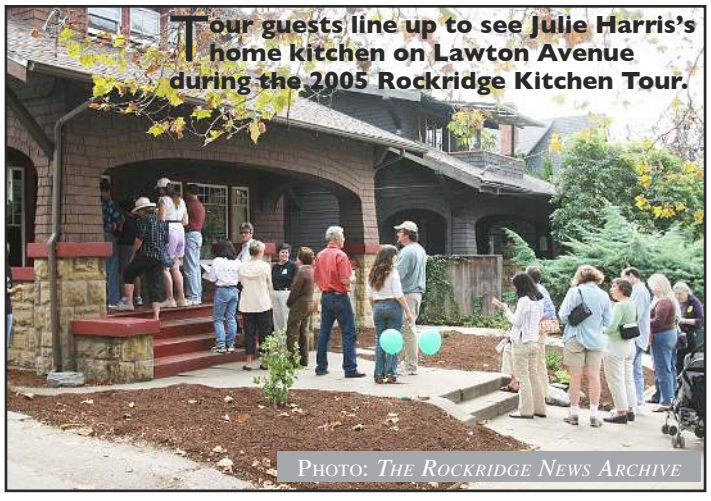
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Got Kitchens? The Rockridge Kitchen Tour Returns in 2007

by Jennifer Edmister

Rockridge is well known for many wonderful things, including the regionally-renowned Rockridge Kitchen Tour which attracts kitchen aficionados from throughout the Bay Area to tour renovated and remodeled Rockridge kitchens. If you have—or will soon have—a newly renovated or remodeled kitchen, RCPC invites you to submit it for the 2007 Rockridge Kitchen Tour, coming in October. Past tours have featured exquisite kitchens of all sizes, from Bungalow style to contemporary and beyond.

For more information, contact Jennifer Edmister at toejrb@earthlink.net or call RCPC at 510/644-4228, attention Kitchen Tour.



Tour guests line up to see Julie Harris's home kitchen on Lawton Avenue during the 2005 Rockridge Kitchen Tour.

PHOTO: *THE ROCKRIDGE NEWS ARCHIVE*

ROCKRIDGE SCHOOL EVENTS AND REPORTS

Schools

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steadily improved, despite political controversy over management decisions. Oakland Unified School District's Katrina Scott George, who has worked under former Superintendent Dennis Chaconas and state administrator Randy Ward, has documented school progress. Her data indicates that in 1999, 37 Oakland public schools had an Academic Performance Index (API) below 500 out of a possible 1,000 API. Today there are only nine such low-scoring schools. In 1999, there were 11 Oakland public schools with an API over 700, and today there are 42 – approximately half of the district's schools.

Schools in the Rockridge/Temescal area and their API rankings are shown in the chart below. The gains were achieved after increasing teacher salaries, updating the curriculum from kindergarten through 8th-grade, improving the use of classroom data to guide instruction and giving school leaders greater control over their budget, among other measures.

Despite the political battles and staff upheaval since the state took over, the school board, Mr. Chaconas and Dr. Ward have articulated educational goals that have translated into better teaching and learning.

We still have a long way to go in Oakland, but I fully support a return to local control next year. An elected school board working closely with parents and teachers is the ideal way to assure the best for Oakland's students. The educational program, as illustrated by state scores, is flourishing. To assure future fiscal stability, Assemblyman Swanson's bill would require the appointment of a state trustee who would have oversight and veto power over the budget. This model, which has worked well in other state-controlled school districts, is an essential next step for Oakland's schools as they pursue solvency and academic excellence.

API gains came after increased teacher salaries, updated curricula, guided instruction and greater local budget control.

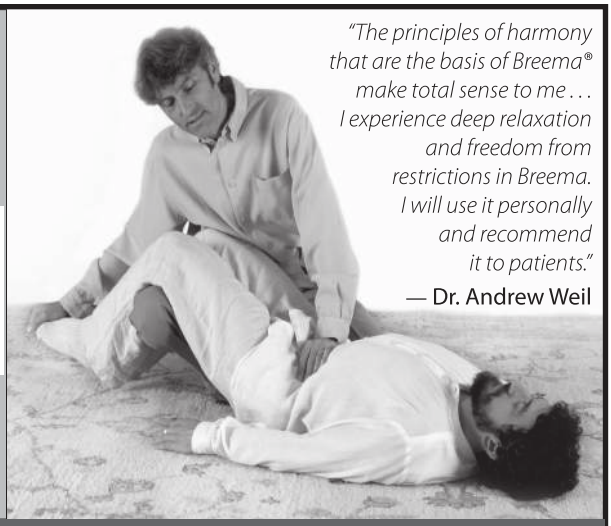
SCHOOL	API		API CHANGE	API % CHANGE
	1999	2006		
Emerson Elementary	480	652	+ 172	+ 36
Piedmont Ave Elem	558	735	+ 177	+ 32
Peralta Elementary	638	799	+ 161	+ 25
Kaiser Elementary	714	855	+ 141	+ 20
Chabot Elementary	781	923	+ 142	+ 18
Oakland Technical HS	506	611	+ 105	+ 21

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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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Brunner Convenes North Oakland 'Condo Fever' Meeting; Draws Strong Neighborhood Response

by Cy Gulassa

Condominium supporters, opponents and everybody in between showed up for a community debate on higher-density development last month, sponsored by City Councilmember Jane Brunner, who kept tempers leashed with threats to stop the meeting if things got out of control.

"North Oakland real estate is hot," she said. "Proposed projects include 845 new condo units. Add that to the 540 units for the MacArthur BART project, and you've got a total of 1,385 units. The condos are coming; the question is, how do we want them to come?"

Brunner said population pressures, a desire for affordable housing, convenient public transportation, proximity to work and the attraction of urban diversity were among the factors fueling the drive to build condominiums along Oakland's major corridors. "People no longer want to commute from Stockton or Modesto," she said.

She also acknowledged the drawbacks of condo development: parking shortages, increases in traffic, blocked views, destruction of old buildings and soaring heights, which collectively change the character of the neighborhood. In particular she criticized the cookie cutter look of projects. "All this development is starting to look alike and getting boring. Jack London Square is fine but we don't want Jack London Square all over the city," she said. "We need to hold developers to a higher standard and develop quality buildings that are affordable and reflect our vision for our neighborhoods."

The central problem, Brunner said, is that the provisions of Oakland's General Plan, adopted eight years ago, are broadly framed, and there was no updating of the city's zoning ordinances to bring them into harmony with the Plan. This omission has allowed project applicants to bypass the customary zoning standards, exacerbating conflicts within the community. To remedy the situation, in Temescal she has started a design review process that grapples with the core issues of parking, height, setbacks and aesthetics, and she will propose a new set of zoning rules for possible adoption by the City Council later this year. Brunner also announced the appointment of her aide Zac Wald as "czar" of planning issues, and said she wants the planning department to issue timely notices, hold early meetings, and allow for reasonable modifications without always having to appeal to the city council for resolution.



Picketers display their views on condo development at a meeting sponsored by Jane Brunner and held at Peralta Elementary School in December. From left, Robert Temple, Jimme James, Robert Brokl, Virginia Browning, Alfred Crofts, Joyce Smith, Adele Schenker. Photo: Cy Gulassa

The meeting's panel consisted of developers, who described the scope of their projects in detail, including size, setbacks, landscaping and amenities, and spokespersons for local groups who alternately praised and criticized the condo proposals and the rationales for higher density. After the presentations, over 40 members of the audience had one minute each to express their views. Many touted the virtues of specific projects and the need for higher density along Oakland's major corridors (Telegraph, Broadway, San Pablo, Martin Luther King, Jr. Way) to accommodate the millions that demographers say are headed for the Bay Area over the next decade. One developer said these corridors, if properly developed, had the potential to become like "grand European boulevards."

But others warned that certain aspects

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RCPC Land Use Committee

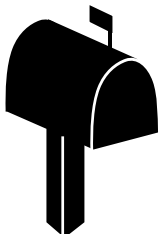
Update: Albertsons

by Hiroko Kurihara,
Land Use Committee Chair

At newsletter press time in early January, RCPC had not heard who the new Albertsons tenent is, but more information about zoning requirements for the site has been learned from Darin Ranelletti, senior planner at the city planning and zoning department, and Justin Horner, chief of staff for Councilmember Jane Brunner:

- A conditional use permit (CUP) is required for general food sales (e.g., markets, cafés, supermarkets, restaurants). Lucky/Albertsons did not have a CUP because the store existed prior to the establishment of the requirement.
- A CUP is required for any new general retail sales activity (such as Ross) if the space exceeds 7,500 sq. ft. Albertsons is about 23,000 square feet.
- The Albertsons facility was a legally non-conforming general food sales use (distinct from general retail sales); the same use by a replacement facility is "grandfathered" (that is, allowed by right), unless the plans include expanding the envelope of the building or doing any other work. However, if the site remains vacant for more than a year, then a new general food sales activity would require a CUP.
- The liquor license for the property has expired. Any new facility that desires to sell liquor at the site would need to apply to the state for a liquor sales permit. New alcohol sales would also require a zoning variance, because the site is located within 1,000 feet of Claremont Middle School.

RCPC has discussed the need to adopt a proactive stance if current negotiations fail, and to work with Councilmember Jane Brunner on seeking (among other things) a traffic analysis and improvements in pedestrian safety, lighting and landscaping, as conditions of any new CUP for the Albertsons site.



Letters to The Editor

The Rockridge News
5245 College Avenue, PMB 311, Oakland, CA 94618
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The Rockridge News welcomes letters to the editor. Please limit to 200 words and include name, address and a phone number for verification. Only your name will appear with your letter. Letters may be edited for clarity and brevity.

Rhetoric Cloaks Proposed Condominium Development

Editor:

Condomania – the current answer to developers' prayers for short term gain – is sweeping the commercial corridors of MLK Jr. Way, Shattuck, Telegraph, and Broadway.

Variances and conditional use permits are being handed out like candy by the planning department to exceed height limits, eliminate or reduce setbacks from neighboring properties and residences, and provide the barest minimum of off-street parking and required open space. Inadequate noticing of projects under consideration means most neighbors are in the dark until it is too late to do anything.

Unless we do something, you won't recognize your neighborhood. The developers and their allies are cloaking themselves in the rhetoric of smart growth, density, and in-fill. Opponents of these out-of-scale projects are now not just vilified as "anti-development NIMBYs," but as promoting global warming!

The development proponents – many of whom also pay lip-service to "affordability" – ignore the tenants being forced out of rent-controlled units to make way for the upscale, market-rate condos. We already have woefully inadequate infrastructure – overwhelmed police and fire, failing schools, potholes and broken sidewalks – and can't even cope with existing conditions.

There is no legal linkage and no guarantee that building generic condo high-rises in North Oakland preserves farmland and open space elsewhere as proponents claim. Nor is the city demanding sufficient mitigation for parks, schools, and police and very little for street and traffic improvements.

What can we do?

Demand a more representative planning commission that's not just a developer rubber stamp! Demand that variances and conditional use permits be thoughtfully granted, not routinely allowed to powerful developers so every new building exceeds the height limits, eliminates setbacks, and crowds neighbors. Demand that developers making killer profits underwrite the additional costs of police, fire, schools and other services their projects require. Demand a master plan, as Jane Brunner once upon a time proposed, before more of their projects are approved. Demand TRUE in-fill housing – vacant lots, truly blighted buildings; NOT removal of functional, useable buildings.

Join a growing coalition that includes Neighborhood Preservation (655-3841) and North Oakland Coalition for Sustainable Community (654-2329).

— Robert Brokl

RCPC has not responded appropriately to apparent conflict of roles

Editor:

I, and others, were present at a meeting when the RCPC land use committee chair deceived committee members, and have been disturbed that the board of directors, when informed of the incident by letter and in person, failed to take action.

At an RCPC land use committee meeting in September, committee chair Hiroko Kurihara concealed her relationship with a new land use organization (ULTRA– Urbanists for a Livable Temescal/Rockridge Area) that is ideologically pro-development and higher density in the greater Rockridge area. When asked for the names of members of this group, whose mission conflicts sharply with that of RCPC, she complied but failed to identify herself as a member and founder. Only later did committee members learn that she was, and continues to be, an active member of this group.

I, and others, expressed our concerns to the board in writing and later in person at a board meeting in November. The board acknowledged in writing that Ms. Kurihara failed to disclose her relationship, and at the board meeting further acknowledged that she had been misleading.

However, to date, the board has taken no

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disciplinary action and apparently finds no conflict of interest with its land use chair serving simultaneously as an active member of a competing land use group with a substantially different agenda. Deceiving a committee whose members represent the community is by extension a communal wrong and a violation of the integrity and trust essential for the continuing success of RCPC.

I believe that Ms. Kurihara should be removed as chair of the committee. Her duplicitous behavior and poor judgment warrant such action, and I am at a loss to understand the board's inaction.

The foundation of a representative community body is honesty, accountability, and fidelity, with regard to both principle and the people represented. A serious conflict of interest combined with deception and passive board oversight is a recipe for very unhappy future surprises. I am saddened and somewhat bewildered to find that I must write this letter, but I believe that the Rockridge Community has a right to know the facts.

— Eric Neville
Land Use Committee member; Former RCPC Board member, and former Land Use Committee Chair

RCPC Chair: "The board will continue to monitor all internal appointments."

Dear Mr. Neville:

First, I would like to assure you that the RCPC board takes your concerns regarding Ms. Kurihara's affiliation with ULTRA very seriously. However, we differ with your interpretation that the Board has not taken action.

When concerns were first raised, the Board engaged in a lengthy and thoughtful discussion about whether it was a conflict of interest for the chair of the RCPC land use committee – or any other board member – to also be a member of another organization involved in land use issues in Rockridge. At that time, the board voted not to seek to change the existing rules which allow board members to have affiliations with other organizations, even if there are overlapping issue areas. The board subsequently invited you and others who object to Ms. Kurihara's affiliation with ULTRA to the November board meeting where we listened to your concerns and shared our reasoning for this policy decision. We regret that you are not satisfied with the board's decision.

As stated previously, the board will continue to monitor all internal appointments, including the chairmanship of the land use committee, to ensure that such appointments serve the stated purposes and goals of the RCPC, and that RCPC's goals are not subordinated to any outside agenda.

— Jessica Pitt, Board Chair

EBMUD calls for conservation, ignores leaks

Editor:

The East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) is calling for water conservation this winter, and their recent mailing says 50 gallons per person per day should be sufficient. At the same time, their own facility at Chabot and Golden Gate Avenue is leaking about 20 gallons a minute into Chabot Road, and has been for over a month. That represents the proposed daily allotment for around 600 people. Similarly, when water bubbling up into the street (say at Roslyn Court) is reported, they tend to take over a month to repair it. It's hard to view their insistence that everyone but themselves conserve without imputing some pretty serious hypocrisy to them.

— Ron Sipherd

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The Zoning Counter

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.

5253 College Avenue

Proposal: Construction of a new three-story six-unit building over ground floor commercial.

Applicant/Owner/Phone Number: Kirk Peterson, 510/547-0275

Case File Number: CDV 06-604

Planning Permits Required: Design Review for new construction, Variance to allow more than 20% of group open space on the rooftop, and Conditional Use permits for ground floor parking and re-establishment of the existing non-retail ground floor use.

General Plan: Neighborhood Center Mixed Use

Zoning: C-31 Special Retail Commercial Zone

Case Planner: Pete Vollmann at 510/238-6167 or pvollman@oaklandnet.com

420 Avon Street

Proposal: To subdivide one lot with two existing detached units into two separate lots.

Applicant: Martin Bloom

Contact Person/Phone: 510/207-7446

Owner: Martin Bloom

Planning Permits Required: Tentative Parcel Map to subdivide one lot into two and a Conditional Use Permit to waive the minimum lot area, lot width and street frontage.

Case Planner: Jason Madani at 510/238-4790 or jsmadani@oaklandnet.com

5830 Ross Street

Proposal: To construct a new attached garage at ground level (right/southeast side), expand an existing bedroom at the second level (right/southeast side), and expand habitable space in a portion of the existing attic level with a dormer at the front. Includes removal of the existing detached garage in the rear yard.

Applicant: Jarvis Architects

Contact Person/Phone: 510/654-6755

Owner: Robert McClain

Planning Permits Required: Design Review to construct additions to an existing dwelling and a Variance to locate the new attached garage approximately 1-1/2 feet from the right/southeast side lot line. (Note: the bedroom addition above the garage is proposed to be located 5 feet from the property line such that it meets the required 5 foot minimum setback).

Historic Status: Potential Designated Historic

Case Planner: Ann Clevenger at 510/238-6980 or aclevenger@oaklandnet.com.

Zoning Counter, page 9

EBMUD Introduces Color Alert System to Avoid Water Rationing

by Claire Isaacs Wahrhaftig

Water users will notice a new color-code system alerting them to possible mandatory water rationing this winter.

EBMUD (East Bay Municipal Utility District) spokespeople say that a 10% reduction in overall water usage is essential until March to avoid disruption to water supplies while engineers reroute water flow into the recently completed bypass of the former tunnel under the Oakland Hills. The utility is completing the final stage of the seismic retrofit of the Claremont Water Tunnel at the foot of Chabot Road under the BART overpass. Customers affected are those north of Highway 24 from Crockett to north Oakland, with a total of 13 cities involved.

EBMUD is asking customers to reduce water demand by a "modest" amount, about 10% of the total 400,000 gallons used daily in the north sector. The alert consists of four color codes corresponding to actual water usage:



GREEN (Low): indicates that reduction goals are met. Customers are asked to maintain this level of demand.

YELLOW (Moderate): indicates demand is higher than the district is comfortable with, and specifies curtailing outdoor water use and fixing leaky toilets and other fixtures.

ORANGE (Urgent): indicates demand is too great to guarantee a reliable water supply. Under orange, mandatory rationing could be quickly triggered by abnormally warm weather or operational problems. Cut demand immediately; shut off sprinklers, curtail washing cars and hosing driveways.

RED (Severe): likelihood of mandatory rationing is great. The call for voluntary reduction has been ineffective. Cut back immediately on water use while district considers rationing.

Users should consider all forms of water reduction. Some successful past practices include saving cold water runoff when running taps to obtain hot water for bathing and dishwashing. Capture the cold water in pitchers and use it for indoor plants and refrigerator storage. Fewer toilet flushes will reduce use significantly, as will shorter showers and discontinuing tub baths. Load washers fully before operating.

The Claremont Water tunnel is located directly on the Hayward Fault. Three recent earthquakes in the 3.5 – 3.7 Richter range, all with epicenters near Berkeley/Rockridge, shook the middle segment of the Hayward Fault. It is to avoid a complete destruction of the 1929 tunnel that the new bypass has been built. The rest of the over 3-mile tunnel, which bores through the hills, has been strengthened with the latest engineering technology.

EBMUD will issue an alert each Monday. The last one before January press time was ORANGE, suggesting that customers have not yet understood and learned to comply with the requested 10% reduction.

Those new to California and the Bay Area should note that recent heavy rainfall did not significantly affect the water supply. Local water is brought down from the Sierra Nevada Mountains and is dependent on the yearly snow pack. EBMUD says the local reduction is required as the final operation to transfer the flow from the old tunnel to the new is put into place.

Anyone with questions should contact the office of Senior Public Information Officer Charles C. Hardy at 510/287-0141.



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Rockridge Real Estate Turns Real

by Ortrun Niesar

As we enter the first quarter of the new year, Rockridge home sales continue to be solid but are decidedly conservative. The total number of single-family homes sold in 2006 was 112, compared to 124 in 2005. Not much of a surprise to anyone, inventory of good houses for sale was also somewhat below par. And, on average, it took 22 days or more to sell a home rather than the 13 we were used to. Sigh!

The good news is that the market here in Rockridge, despite dire predictions, is not crashing around our ears, and there are few signs that it will. The overall picture is far from bleak. It just looks a little flat. Prices did not increase much over the same period last year, and in some categories there was a drop of about 3.5%. The bad news: it is true that multiple bids occurred only for certain desirable properties, and that this activity resulted in average overbids of no more than about 5%-7%. At the same time, more demand was put on sellers to bring their homes to the market with high-quality improvements and in move-in condition. Buyers were willing and able, but they were definitely looking to get full value for their money.

What Sold?

- Homes that were priced correctly and offered perceived value
- Homes in desirable locations (this goes without saying)
- Homes that were above average in overall quality, improvements and presentation
- Homes that retain their craftsman character

What Didn't Sell?

- Homes that were overpriced
- Homes that were unattractive or had obvious flaws
- Problem properties of any kind
- Homes that were poorly marketed.

Who Viewed the Properties?

Everybody. Open houses were well visited. Buyers and home owners alike were full of questions about the market.

Who Bought?

Only those who had a real need to buy at this time.

Who's the New Kid on the Block?

Condos in Rockridge? Yes. And they are affordable and popular too.

Comparative Sales Analysis

Compare Rockridge sales price averages for detached single family homes with the same period last year as shown in the tables below. Overall, the market is adjusting gently for us in Rockridge.

What's the Good News?

Can you do well in this market? Of course, but it takes a willingness to adjust to the new reality and adapt good-naturedly to the things we cannot change. Probably the most important factor in reaching a satisfactory sale or purchase will be for buyers and sellers to re-examine their relationship and establish some kind of new understanding, perhaps one where the negotiation process between seller and buyer is conducted in a balanced, dignified and businesslike manner. Battle-weary buyers are sending a message: they are sick of bidding wars, and they mean it! On the other side, sellers not attuned to the current climate are often indignant when bids are offered below asking. That needs to stop.

Should prices be dropped dramatically? Of course not. There is no real need for that. But unwarranted overpricing in these past months has meant either no sale or, as the title companies have acknowledged, a high rate of cancellation of purchase during the escrow period. To be successful, realtors and sellers will need to work hard together at the outset toward establishing the right price in this particular market.

Rockridge home sales continue to be solid but are decidedly conservative.

Time Period/BR	2BR	3BR	4+BR	No. Sold
Third Quarter				
Jul-Oct 2005	$813,200	$1,003,104	$1,428,463	47
Jul-Oct 2006	$798,714	$1,002,770	$1,528,000	31
One Year				
2005	$802,513	$956,722	$1,466,920	124
2006	$760,782	$962,488	$1,498,687	112

Compare Rockridge Home Sale Prices 2002–2006

Year	Avg. Price	% Change	Median Price	%Change
2002	$770,604		$691,500	
2003	$847,637	9.9	$750,000	+ 8.5
2004	$902,000	6.4	$805,000	+ 7.3
2005	$1,032,139	14.4	$930,500	+ 15.6
2006	$1,111,317	7. 6	$903,500	- 3.0

This analysis covers Rockridge homes sales from the Berkeley border south to Broadway Terrace and 51st Street, west to Colby and east to Highway 13. Information supplied by EBRD 2006 is deemed to be reliable but not guaranteed. Ortrun Niesar is a realtor with Prudential California. (ortrun.niesar@prurealty.com)

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Rockridge Cornucopia

Barry A. Kaufman

Food of the Prophet

One of the best ways to understand a culture is through studying and enjoying its cuisine. Although the Arab nations are very diverse, a common virtue is sharing food with others. This tradition has its origins in the Hebrew Bible, where God commanded Abraham to invite strangers into his tent to share a meal. Hospitality is considered a duty for all Muslims. The sayings of Muhammad found in the Quran command the people to entertain "warmly and joyously." To entertain many people together is considered an honor.

The spread of Islam was the most important factor in the development of Arabic cuisine, comparable to the influence of France and China. The death of the Prophet in Arabia in 632 A.D. was followed by wars waged by followers of his faith. Bedouin Arabs from the Arabian Desert spread Islam throughout North Africa, Spain, and through the Eastern Mediterranean and Arabian Peninsula. During the period spanning the 8th through the 13th centuries, known as the Golden Age of Islam, Arabic cooking was transformed into a sophisticated art. Mecca was the religious center, Baghdad was a major political and religious capital and Persia (now Iran), was the cultural center for court cuisine.

By the 13th century, the center of gravity shifted from Persia and Baghdad to the Turkish Ottoman Empire. At first the Ottoman Turks adopted Persian and Arab cuisine, but gradually they developed a gastronomy of their own. The Sultan's royal table took on the glamour of the lavish Persian banquets. Meals consisted of numerous courses of small portion plates, called *mezza* in Arabic. Spanish tapas are directly related to the Turkish mezza.

As in Jewish law, the Quran prescribes a very strict code of Muslim dietary laws. Like Jews, Muslims are prohibited from eating pork. Similar to kosher laws, sheep and cattle must be slaughtered according to a prescribed method known as *halal*, which means "permissible" in Arabic. (There are several halal markets on San Pablo Avenue between University and Hearst in Berkeley.)

Classic Arabic seasoned lamb is called *shwarma*. It is cut in thin slices and served in warm pita bread with a yogurt sauce. Another Bedouin staple is *bastrima*, dried beef strips similar to beef jerky.

Arabic cooking is characterized by the use of spices and spice blends. Grilling little morsels of lamb or beef over charcoal is everywhere associated with Muslim cooking. Skewer cookery, shish kebob, meat, chicken and fish are the most popular street food in every Arabic country. Chickpeas, fava beans, lentils and bulgur wheat have been part of the Arab diet since the days of the Prophet. Nuts, particularly almonds and walnuts, have also been used since ancient times. Yogurt, honey and pomegranate molasses are also widely used in Arab cooking.

The following recipe is for a dip called muhammara, which is served throughout the Arab world. There are many versions of this Turkish and Syrian dip. Serve it with warm pita bread or as an accompaniment to grilled lamb. The recipe is adapted from Claudia Roden's *The New Book of Middle Eastern Food*.

Muhammara

- 1 cup shelled walnuts
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 slice of whole-wheat bread, crusts removed, lightly toasted
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses (see note)
- 1 teaspoon coarsely ground red-pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons of sugar
- Salt to taste

Blend all the ingredients to a rough (not too smooth paste). Mound on an attractive plate.

Note: Pomegranate molasses is available at Rockridge's Pasta Shop.

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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The Zoning Counter

from page 5

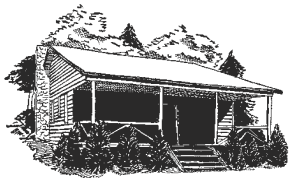
5175 Broadway

Zoning C-30

This project is proposed for the parcel between Poppy Fabrics and Wendy's. The developer is Gary Feiner of Live Oak Fund, LLP; the architect is Remple & Associates of Berkeley.

It is a modern design with retail on the ground floor and 19 units of housing on the upper floors. The proposed design meets C-30 height restrictions. Parking will be below grade.

This project is undergoing design review. The applicant is seeking a variance so the project can be oriented toward Broadway, rather than Coronado.





For nearly 30 years, neighbors on Harwood, Rockwell and Chabot have celebrated the start of the holiday season with a cookie party bash, a great test of their annual resolve to stay thin during the season. This year, over 60 neighbors dropped by Kathy and Bill Garcia's home on Rockwell to consume hundreds of sugary favorites, catch up on the news and toast the holidays. Above: a sampler of guests who visited during the 3-hour fête on Sunday, December 17. Photo: Cy Gulassa

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Town Hall

from page 1

Please join us for this important meeting. We greatly value the input of community members and look forward to hearing your priorities for Rockridge in 2007.

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Just in time to guide the sun through winter solstice and assure its resurrection, the Ring of Cold Steel Longsword Team danced in the Rockridge streets December 21 and (above) reveled at the home of Sharon and David Green on Harwood Avenue. Jocelyn Reynolds invites anyone interested in this age-old folk tradition of northern England to join the team. Call 415/731-7104 or e-mail joss@periodpieces.com**.**

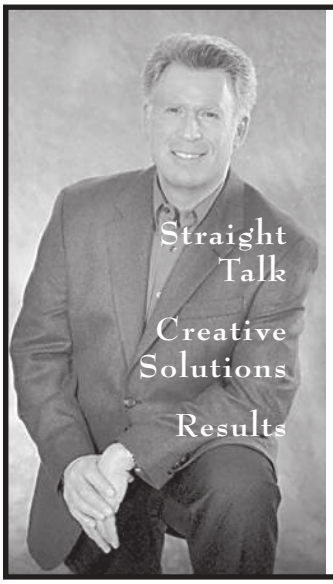
PHOTO: CY GULASSA

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The Rockridge Muse

by Claire Isaacs Wahrhaftig

Calling All Rockridge Artists

Rockridge artists take note: Apply for a public art project limited to artists who live in Oakland. Proposals are sought for a West Oakland revitalization project at Raimondi Park, on Wood Street between 18th and 19th Streets. The park is a key West Oakland sports field used by many youth and adult teams and serves as a community recreation center. The budget is $37,500. Submission deadline is Monday, January 22, 2007.

The Oakland Public Art Advisory Committee is offering a project orientation and Public Art Request for Qualifications (RFQ) workshop in early January. View the prospectus and get your application form at the Cultural Arts and Marketing web site, http://www.oaklandculturalarts.org/main/callforartists.htm. Good luck!

A Tribute to Temescal, Rockridge's Sister Neighborhood

Jeff Norman, Temescal organizer par excellence, has written a historical book,



Jeff Norman, artist, author

Temescal Legacies, a delightful portrait of a fascinating neighborhood, generously illustrated with photographs, documents and graphics. The book's design is unusual: The endpapers are maps of Temescal, typefaces vary from modern to traditional, and insets and clippings enliven the reading experience. Jeff based this book on personal interviews with residents and included their portraits.

At a reception at Diesel A Bookstore last month, Jeff noted that his subject is really "greater Temescal," the boundaries of which once included lower Rockridge before Highway 24 was built. What is refreshing is that instead of trying to write a linear history of the neighborhood, Jeff chose to be selective, viewing his subject from five angles, each of which comprises a unique story in time and place.

Jeff singles out five significant events since World War II, including the establishment of Studio One. He tells the story of the community fundraising that created this unique art studio for adults in the late 1940s, a landmark now undergoing renovation.

Another chapter discusses the "rise and fall" of the Sacramento Northern Railway – with its depot and railyard at Shafter and 40th Street – which ran up Shafter, across College, through Rockridge and around Lake Temescal enroute to the Central Valley. In 1912, Rockridge residents tried to prevent the railroad from building its yard on Chabot.

One of the most disruptive historical events was the construction of the Grove Shafter Freeway, now designated as Highway 24. For a heart-wrenching experience of the cost of progress, turn to pages 94 and 95 which illustrate from the same vantage point the before and after effects of the massive project.

A chapter is devoted to the East Bay Negro Historical Society, a small grassroots history organization with a storefront museum, which eventually evolved into the African-American Museum and Library (AAMLO) downtown near City Hall. There are accounts of segregation and real-estate covenants against non-whites.

Jeff also writes about Temescal Creek, the community effort to save and improve the Temescal Greenbelt, open space and the creek itself. Temescal was once an independent community, but was eventually annexed by Oakland.

Jeff has been devoting his life to Temescal for 22 years. He helped establish its newsletter, as well as the neighborhood group, Temescal Neighbors Together, (TNT). By narrating its history, he helps establish the special identity for this fascinating neighborhood.

Temescal Legacies, published by Shared Ground, is available at Diesel A Bookstore, 5433 College Avenue, Oakland (http://diesel.booksense.com/NASApp/store/IndexJsp).



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5935 Manchester Dr.	4/4	$2,500,000	$2,475,000	12/15/2006

December 2005 to December 2006, Comparison of Home Sales in Rockridge:
It is looking up this holiday season. The median price of homes rose 7.5% from 2005 to 2006. This has not been the case for other neighboring districts. Last year there were 3 homes that closed, compared to 4 this year. Days on the market, however, increased from 20 days in 2005, to 34 days in 2006.

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Condo Meeting

from page 3

of high-density projects require attention and mitigation. These include: parking and traffic congestion; pedestrian and bike safety; air and noise pollution; sun and view blockage; absence of green spaces; inappropriate scale; demolition of historic buildings; strain on sewage and water systems, and on police, fire and local school services; and loss of affordable rental units. Densification is also an issue, with one speaker pointing out that 2,800 units are going up within proximity of his residence. Another wanted to know what happens in a severe earthquake.

City planning officials, according to some, need to provide early notification, installation of storyboards at sites, public participation, "and should quit handing out conditional use permits (CUPs) like candy." Planning commissioners should respect community advice—they routinely dismiss petitions signed by hundreds of residents. Planning Director Claudio Cappio acknowledged the need for improvements in the planning process, including early notification.

There was also concern about whether the condos are attracting the right mix of people for investing in and building a diverse community — condo buyers, it was said, tend to be young skilled workers and professionals without children, who may move elsewhere once they start families. Pricing, it was pointed out, also creates its own form of exclusion. The majority of units start at $400K, but even the lowest price, $370K, requires an estimated income of $75K for purchase, far out of reach of many workers and service providers.

Some wondered whether the frenetic pace of development would eventually exceed demand, leading to a softening market and devaluation of units.



Panelists representing developers and neighborhood organizations argued the pros and cons of higher density along Oakland's major traffic corridors at a meeting last month at Peralta Elementary School. PHOTO: CY GULASSA

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Shake, Rattle and Burn?

A simple upgrade can help avoid the worst outcome

by Annette Floystrup

The recent flurry of local earthquakes, coming just after the 15th anniversary of our firestorm, is a good reminder that homeowners need to protect against fire. The California State Governor's Office of Emergency Preparedness estimates that over 175 fires will break out in our Berkeley-Oakland area under normal conditions after a major earthquake on the Hayward or San Andreas faults.

The number of fires could easily triple or quadruple during hot or windy conditions. Local fire departments, while better prepared for disasters today, are simply not equipped to fight hundreds of simultaneous fires, even assuming an adequate supply of water. Further, in addition to fighting fires, other top priorities of the fire departments include coordinating outside resources, rescuing people in collapsed buildings, and supporting governmental functions and hospitals.

Many of the projected 175-plus fires could ignite entire blocks and neighborhoods, as happened in the 1906 San Francisco and the more recent Kobe, Japan earthquakes. Why not simply get earthquake insurance and trust to luck? Rather than risk the odds, the best way to avoid the worst is to make your home earthquake and fire resistant, according to the experts. The cost of seismic upgrading has a much higher cost benefit than earthquake insurance over the years. Besides, insurance policies have very high deductibles and there is no guarantee that the insurance pool will be sufficient to pay full dollar value.

One of the most important earthquake retrofits you can do is install an automatic gas shut-off valve. This valve will shut off your gas whether or not you are home should a strong earthquake hit. This protects not only your home, but also all your neighbors, from fire. The valves are usually easy to reset and do not activate in small to medium quakes. Some counties and insurance companies now require these valves.

Such devices fall into two categories: a seismically activated type which responds to a shaking force and a flow type which senses excessive flow.

The first type usually contains a ball which rests in a socket. When shaking hits 5.4 on the Richter scale, the ball falls out and a mechanism triggers the valve to close. The second type is designed to sense breakages in the gas pipes by detecting excessive flow of gas through the lines. Most of the valves have a reset device built onto them.

There are a number of valves that are state certified and most are quite cheap (mostly under $100). Pacific Gas & Electric is officially valve-neutral. "Everyone needs to make the determination whether this device is best for them," says Jason Alderman, a PG&E representative. "But if you decide to install one, it's very important to have a licensed plumber do the installation. Don't buy any do-it-yourself kits or videos, and make sure the plumber installs it on the homeowner side of the meter. If installed on the PG&E side of the meter, we'll ask you to move it, at an additional expense." If you have only $300 or $400 to spend on earthquake preparedness, this is an effective step to take. (The author has had a Vanguard Seismic Safety Valve on her house since right after the Loma Prieta quake. No subsequent earthquake has been strong enough to trigger the device.)

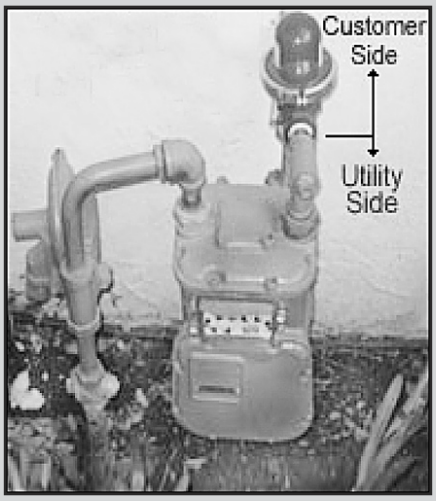
Annette Floystrup formerly taught emergency preparedness to corporations.

Automatic Gas Shutoff Devices

Some cities and counties require the installation of automatic gas shutoff devices, which may include excess flow and/or earthquake actuated gas shutoff valves. Regulations vary, but generally apply to new construction, or significant alterations or additions to existing buildings. Contact your city or county agency for regulations.

— From PG&E's web site

Editor's Note: *The illustration and text boxed here are from the PG&E website at* http://www.pge.com/safety/prepare_natural_disasters/earthquakes/gas_shutoff_devices/index.html *and are presented for general information, not necessarily as an endorsement of the installation of gas shutoff devices. Consult PG&E and your plumber for information before deciding..*



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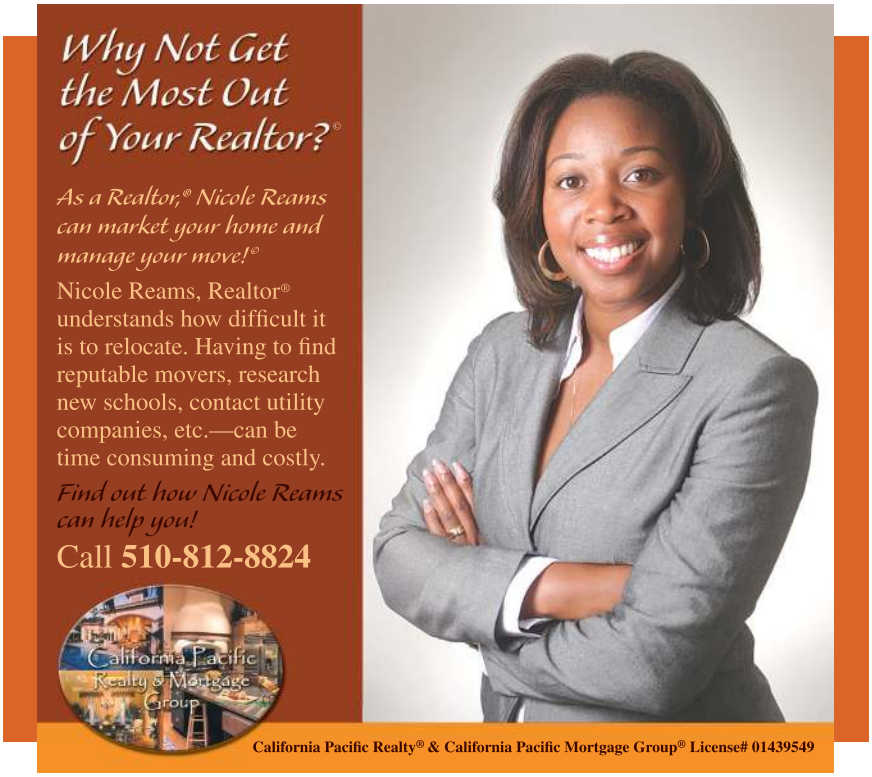
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E-mail *Rockridge News* Community Calendar items to: joellis1@hotmail.com, phone 653-3210 (after noon), or mail to: *Rockridge News* Community Calendar, 5245 College Avenue, PMB 311, Oakland, CA 94618. Deadline is the next to the last Tuesday of the 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**. For February meeting topic and information on all District One issues, 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 Broadway (at College Ave.), Ralls Bldg. room 203. Directions and more information: www.rockridgencpc.com.

Rockridge Branch Library

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FOR CHILDREN:

- **Toddler Story Time:** 1st and 2nd Saturdays, 10:30am: 1/6, 1/10, 2/3.
- **Pre-School Story Time:** 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 10:30am: 1/17, 2/7.
- **Pajama Story Time:** 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 7pm: 1/9, 1/23.

FOR TEENS AGES 13 AND UP:

- **Anime Club:** Watch and talk about new anime (Japanese animation) with other teens. 2nd Tuesday of each month (1/9), from 5 to 6:30pm in the upstairs meeting room. For questions about this or any other teen event, call Susy, the Teen Specialist Librarian, at 597-5017.

FOR ADULTS:

- **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/).Third Saturday of the month (12/16), from 1 to 5pm. For more information: 420-8775 or Writefox@aol.com.
- **Knitting Classes for Seniors** (50+), in collaboration with the Pleasant Valley Adult School. Instructor: Teri Barr. All levels welcome. Beginners bring light color yarn and a pair of size 8 needles. If experienced, bring projects to work on. Tuesdays, from 12:30 to 2:30pm in the upstairs meeting room.
- **"Women, Wisdom and Wealth:" Financial Planning for Women.** Workshop led by **George M. Noceti**, instructor at UCB Extension and Financial Advisor with Morgan Stanley. Workbook and other materials provided. Co-sponsored with American Association of University Women (AAUW). Saturday, 1/20, 2 to 4:30pm.
- **Lawyers in the Library: Free legal advice**. First Tuesday of each month from 6 to 8pm. Advance sign-up starts 5pm. For more information: 597-5017.

ART EXHIBITS:

Gallery: January: **David Hardy and group**; paintings from the Atelier School of Classical Realism.
February: **Kathryn Bettis** Photographs.
Lobby Display Case: January: "Season of Non-Violence Exhibit." by the **Bay Area Season for Non-violence Committee**.
February: **John Baldwin:** collage and acrylic.

LIBRARY HOURS:
Monday and Tuesday, 12:30 to 8pm.
Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday 10am to 5:30pm
Friday, 12 to 5:30pm
Closed: Sundays; also Monday 1/15.

Diesel Book/Readings and Events

All events are FREE and open to the public

Thursday, 1/11, 7:30pm. **Don Hanlon Johnson**: *Everyday Hopes, Utopian Dreams*.

- Thursday, 1/25, 7:30pm. **Mark Coleman**: *Awake in the Wild: Mindfulness in Nature as a Path of Self Discovery*.
- Wednesday, 1/31, 7:30pm. **V.O. Blum**: *Split Creek*.
- Thursday, 2/1, 7:30pm. Local author **Daniel Alarcon**: *Lost City Radio*.
- Wednesday, 2/7, 7:30pm. Local author and poet **Kaya Oakes**: *Telegraph*.
- Friday, 2/9, 7:30pm. Basketball great **Kareem Abdul-Jabbar**: *On the Shoulders of Giants*.

5433 College Ave. For more information about other events, Book Discussion Groups and *El Grupito*, the Spanish discussion group: 510/653-9965 or www.dieselbookstore.com.

Peralta Elementary School Kindergarten Open House

Meet our principal and kindergarten teachers to learn about our programs. Wednesday, 1/17, 6:45pm. 460 63rd Street. To RSVP for childcare or for more information call 655-2737 or www.geocities.com/peraltaschool/. **NOTE: school tours are now available on Mondays and Wednesdays**. Call 879-1450 to schedule a tour date. Get information on open enrollment procedures at OUSD's student assignment office at 879-8111.

Jazz at the Chimes

Concert, followed by "meet-and- greet" reception, featuring saxophonist **Anton Schwartz** whose CD, Radiant Blue hit #4 on national radio charts. Sunday, 1/21, 2pm (doors open 1:30pm). Monthly series sponsored by Lifemark Group Arts that feature Bay Area talent. Tickets: $10: kids under 12 free. Chapel of the Chimes, 4499 Piedmont Ave. More info/reservations: 228-3218.

Luna Kids Dance

Free Community event: Open House and Dance Class. Dance, play, improvisation, refreshments and family fun. Meet the Luna Kids Dance faculty and learn more about creative-based dance education. Saturday, 1/6, 1 to 3pm. Julia Morgan Center for the Arts (studio C), 2640 College Avenue, Berkeley. For more information: Rosemary Hannon, 644-3629.

Los Hilos de la Vida/Threads of Life

Exhibition of Latina-themed folkloric Story-Quilts by women and children of the quilter's cooperative in Anderson Valley (Mendocino). Gallery hours: Monday-Friday, 9am to 5pm. The show runs through 1/19/07 at the Women's Cancer Resource Center and Art Gallery 5741 Telegraph Ave., 420-7900. For more information about these quilters and quilts: www.loshilosdelavida.blogspot.com or Molly at 707-895-3277.

Become a Master Composter

Grow a greener community. The Master Composter Program provides free training in composting, soil health and bay-friendly gardening techniques. Participants then train others through a compost community outreach program. Sign up now for classes to be given on Tuesday nights, February through mid-May, including 2 Saturday field trips. Contact StopWaste.Org at 510/444-SOIL or www.BayFriendly.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://botanical-garden.berkeley.edu.

North Oakland Multi-Purpose Senior Center

Program Highlights: Computer classes; Health Insurance counseling and advocacy program; trips, tours and theater outings; Alzheimer's caregivers support group; AARP driver safety classes; BART tickets for seniors over 65; Farmers' Market every Wednesday from 10:30am to 2:30pm. 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 ($2.25 to $4). Call 597-5085 for details about membership, classes/events and opportunities to become a volunteer.

Julia Morgan School for Girls

Adnissions Information Meeting for the **only all-girls middle school (grades 6-8) serving the East Bay**. Opportunity for prospective students and their families to learn about programs and admissions process. Wednesday, January 10, 7pm. Located on the campus of Mills College, 5000 MacArthur Blvd. For more information or to RSVP, call April Word at 632-6000, ext. 125.

Volunteers Needed

- **Jewish Coalition for Literacy**: Reading tutors to introduce students in local elementary schools to the excitement of reading. Tutors are given free comprehensive training and on-going support. Time commitment of one hour per week to work with one to three students. We also accept new and gently used children's books which we donate to public schools in need. Call 839-2900x274, or www.jclread.org.
- **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.
- **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.

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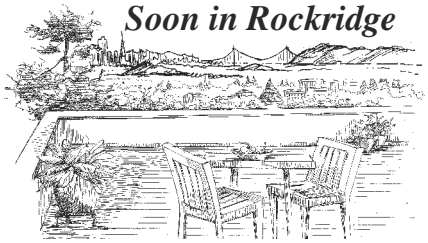
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