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# THE Rockridge News

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## RCPC Town Hall Meeting AGENDA May 2009

Note mtg. start time

**Thursday, May 21, 7:00 p.m.**
**Rockridge Branch Library, 5366 College Avenue at Manila, Community Room (Upstairs)**

- **The City Budget:** Oakland City Council President (and Rockridge resident) Jane Brunner discusses plans for dealing with the City's budget crisis.
- **Teen Zone for the Rockridge Branch Library:** Oakland Public Library Associate Director Gerry Garzon presents Teen Zone details.
- **Safeway's Latest Plans:** Review and discussion of Safeway's latest plans for its College Avenue store, featuring local architect Jerome Buttrick.
- **RCPC ByLaw Amendment:** Members of the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) — persons age 18 or above, who can show evidence of residing in Rockridge — will be invited to vote on an amendment to Section 8.4 of the RCPC Bylaws. The amendment would clarify that the Board may declare vacant the seat of any director who fails or ceases to meet any required qualification of the director's seat that was in effect at the beginning of that director's term of office.

# 4th Bore Project: $3 Million Settlement to Fix Project's Effects on Rockridge Schools



PHOTO: TONY ROSSMANN

**On a sunny April afternoon, Chabot School's safety patrol members witnessed school officials accepting Fourth Bore settlement funds.**

*by Ronnie Spitzer, RCPC board member*

Memorializing the settlement reached in January between Caltrans and the Fourth Bore Coalition, state Sen. Loni Hancock, D-Berkeley, and Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner, D-Berkeley, presented a check for $3 million to Oakland Unified School District officials in a ceremony held April 17 on the Chabot Elementary School baseball field.

With members of Chabot's student traffic patrol looking on, the check was accepted on behalf of the school district by interim School Superintendent Roberta Mayor, School Board member Jody London, and principals Jonathan Mayer of Chabot Elementary and David Chambliss of Cla-

Bore Settlement, page 10

## June 3: Red Oak Realty Office App to Planning Commission

Plan to attend the June 3 hearing at City Hall when the Planning Commission will consider a non-retail use (Red Oak Realty) of ground floor retail space. Let the Planning Commission know that Rockridge residents want to protect our successful retail district.

**Details**: Land Use Committee report, page 5.

# Be Involved! Docents Needed for September 20 Kitchen Tour

*by Jennifer Edmister, tour co-chair*

The 2009 Rockridge Kitchen Tour takes place Sunday, September 20. An ensemble of spectacular kitchens awaits visitors from near and far. Whether you are a kitchen enthusiast in particular, or a Rockridge enthusiast in general, the Kitchen Tour committee cordially invites you to participate in and support this regionally renowned event.

There are many ways to participate, but one of the most popular is to volunteer as a kitchen docent, guiding tour guests through Rockridge's finest kitchens. Docents, and all other volunteers, receive a complimentary ticket to the event. Docents also receive a private pre-tour of three kitchens. If you are interested in being a docent, please contact Nancy Sale at 655-4625.

We are also seeking volunteers for the publicity committee. Publicity volunteers will help contact local media to publicize our event. To volunteer for the publicity committee, please contact Jennifer Edmister at 510/547-2841.

If you would like to support the Rockridge

Kitchen Tour Call, page 12



**RCPC Kitchen Tour docents receive a complimentary ticket and a private pre-tour of three kitchens.** PHOTOS: SUSAN MONTAUK


Andy Charman


Bill Kaufner


Colby Lavin


Ruth Miller

*Photo not available*
Ronnie Spitzer


Ann Winterman

# RCPC Election Fills Board Positions

Rockridge residents voted in April to elect to full board terms four RCPC boardmembers previously appointed to interim positions, and for two new candidates to fill vacant positions on the RCPC board of directors.

Following notice of the election and candidates' statements printed in The Rockridge News, residents attending the April RCPC Town Hall meeting listened as candidates spoke in a panel presentation of their interest in the positions and their intent to work on behalf of the Rockridge community.

Voting was conducted during the April 16 meeting and again on Saturday, April 18, at the Rockridge branch library. Fifty-one residents voted; 40 at the meeting, 11 on Saturday.

Votes cast for each candidate were as follows: Current, appointed board members elected to full terms: Andy Charman, 45; Ronnie Spitzer, 41; Colby Lavin, 41; Bill Kaufner, 39. New board members elected to full terms: Ann Winterman, 34; Ruth Miller, 26.

In a subsequent special meeting, the board elected new officers. Andrew Charman was elected vice-chair, Ruth Miller was elected secretary and Joan Martin was elected treasurer.

Congratulations to the new board members, to those confirmed for full terms and to those elected as officers of the board.

# FORL Board Welcomes New Members

On the night of the April RCPC meeting, the voting community elected four new members to the Friends of the Rockridge Library (FORL) board of directors: Jennifer Alper, Kathryn O'Neal, Shari Tavaf, and Cheryl Vesely. Current co-Chair Carol Bieri was re-elected. The board will welcome these new and returning members at its next meeting Tuesday, May 12, at 7:30 p.m. in the Rockridge branch of the Oakland Public Library.

The board at this meeting will discuss the provision of funds for materials purchases outside those supported by the city budget, the maintenance of the landscaping, security, the proposed Teen Zone inside the library building, and the organization's plans to further the library's mission.

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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 (RCPC), a nonprofit 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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Theresa Nelson.....Neighborhood Merchant
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- Would you like to write a letter to the Editor?

Contact us at one of the following:
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**RCPC Voicemail: 510/869-4200**

Articles submitted for publication may be e-mailed to the above address. Submissions are limited to 600 words; must include the author's name, phone number, e-mail address, and city or neighborhood of residence; and are subject to editing. To reprint a *Rockridge News* article, please contact the editor.

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**☛ June deadline is May 21.**
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# Rockridge Celebrates Earth Day: April 18, 2009

## Earth Day at Rockridge's FROGPark

It was a beautiful sunny Saturday at FROG Park for this year's spring family Earth Day clean up. And let's hear it for our community volunteers! FROG Park wouldn't be the same without them (and in fact wouldn't be here at all), as the City's budget cuts means that community members must help take care of their local parks. Lots of families and neighborhood residents showed up to spruce up their local park, including a local Brownie troop.

We cleaned the playgrounds, sweeping the structures and turning over the fibar mulch; we picked up garbage; we swept the paths; and we cleaned the pond and the creek bed of all the big debris, so that when the creek is turned on this month, there won't be any clogged culverts.

Many thanks to everyone who helped. We also thank Clinton and Will from the city of Oakland – our hardworking, faithful maintenance staff. And thanks to Trader Joe's, Safeway, and Bakesale Betty who contributed tasty treats for the volunteers.

To get involved with future park clean ups or other park projects, please visit the FROG Park website: www.frogpark.org. Hope to see you at the park soon.

*— Jennifer Cooper, chair, FROG Park*

Photos below and below right by Susan Montauk and Don Kinkead, taken at Redondo and Hardy Parks. Names from left to right.


Justin Horner and Violet


Howard Ferrier


Rodrigo Prudencio, De'Mar Lacy, Susan Shawl, John Russell


Patrick Hoge, Jennifer Cooper, Barney Smits, Theresa Nelson, Tamir Scheinok


Lois Dixon and Chris Staller


Clinton Pugh, Theresa Nelson, Will Patterson


Frank Foster, Public Works Agency


Steve Schiesser, Freida and Katya (Euclid Avenue)


Max Feiler


Henry and Tom Dolan


Hannah and Cory Lieu, Michelle Blakeley


Worth the Effort!

## Earth Day on College Avenue with the Rockridge District Association (RDA)







**RDA arranged three Earth Day projects on College Avenue: cleaning the mini-park at Miles and College (left); cleaning and painting in the walkway between College and Hemphill Place (left below); and trimming and cleaning the planting around the library (below).**

**Top: Keenan Brekke (l.); Daniel Brekke; Betsy York; Elizabeth Armstrong; Joyce Gardner, FIT Clothing.**
**Above: Patrick Zak (l.); Rick Wallenback; Susan Bernosky, Allstate Insurance; Nicholas-Lee; Chris Jackson, RDA and NCPC.**

**Above: Carol Bieri (l.); Cathy Furtado (Terrace Street); Eric Warren; Jennifer Kaplan, Rockridge Home.**

# Letters to the Editor

*The Rockridge News welcomes letters to the editor. Your name, address, phone number, e-mail address and city/neighborhood must be included for verification. Only your name will appear with your letter. Letters may be edited for clarity and brevity.*

## Continuing Conversion of College Avenue Retail Space to Office Use Threatens the Lifeblood of Rockridge

**Editor:**

Opposing the Red Oak Realty application to take over the Cotton & Company space makes sense for the neighborhood long-term, and I'm glad that the RCPC board voted its opposition recently. Here's why I believe RCPC's opposition is good for Rockridge.

Writing the Neighborhood Merchant column for the newsletter, I'm fortunate to be able to speak personally with many individual store owners – the people who take enormous financial risks to open a store that fulfills a lifelong dream, and, they hope, meet a neighborhood need.

As Rockridge has prospered, rents have risen dramatically, and, over time, some stores have been forced to close or relocate. During these difficult economic times, stores also face decreased sales while rents remain unchanged, and some have closed recently.

Why is nearly every store that closes replaced by something that is not a retail store? The answer is that restaurants, service business (such as hair salons) and offices have a different financial structure than retail stores, and can pay higher rents for the same ground floor space. This pushes rents ever higher, and drives out the retail stores that cannot afford to pay the same rents as offices. Zoning rules require offices to be located in certain areas so as not to artificially inflate retail rents. Allowing offices in retail zones thus makes it increasingly difficult to retain retail and to maintain the pedestrian-oriented retail environment on College Avenue that is so appealing and important to Rockridge.

When Cotton & Company closed its store in the Dreyer's building, it made available one of the larger retail spaces on College Avenue, unfortunately at a time when retail is struggling and new store openings are outweighed by closures.

It would be a dire mistake for several reasons to allow this retail space to become an office, whether for Red Oak Realty or any other office use:

- First, the original Dreyer's permit mandates that the entire College Avenue frontage be retail, to maintain the flow and streetscape for pedestrians; that should not be violated.
- Second, if an office moves in, this space will likely never be retail again, because store owners will be priced out of the market.
- Third, we have seen other retail spaces converted to office use, sometimes when the office developer offers a tiny sliver of retail or "community space" in front of the office space. While that might sound like a nice compromise, in practice it does not work out. Offices are not open during many retail hours, so the storefront does not really function as a store and lacks the liveliness of a real store.

For instance, when one real estate office was allowed to open by saying they would offer space for community art exhibitions, then displayed the same few sculptures for years on end with no community access, it seems clear that this was never intended to be a community art space, just a way to get around the zoning requirements. And no one has gone back to correct this.

The people who run the stores that make Rockridge a nationally recognized model of a pedestrian-oriented retail area are dedicated to this neighborhood, and many of them live here as well as run these businesses. They deserve our support, and the neighborhood deserves a retail store where it was promised to be retail.

RCPC should fight to maintain all retail space zoned C-31 as retail stores, or College Avenue will someday simply be one long string of offices and restaurants, with not a single store in sight.

***— Theresa Nelson***

Theresa Nelson writes the Neighborhood Merchant column and Changes on College for The Rockridge News. She is a former RCPC chair.

## "Unofficial" Recyclers are Human

**Editor:**

In regards to Mr. Richter's letter in the April issue of The Rockridge News (What Are "Unofficial" Recyclers Up To?), Mr. Richter should understand that, for the most part, these are homeless people who can't do anything else. Yes, they recycle this stuff. Yes, they trade it for cash at recycling centers. No, they don't get much for it but sadly, it is their income.

Perhaps Mr. Richter should come out to the seedy side of town to a recycling center to see how these poor souls make their living. Is it legal? No, and neither is parking the wrong way on a street, obstructing the free flow of traffic by doing less than the speed limit in the passing lane, unnecessary use of high beams or talking on the phone while driving, but I've never heard of anyone being ticketed for these offenses.

The noise and the mess? Yes, it's a drag but, you know, the people who take

Letters to the Editor, page 12

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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 online at www.oaklandnet.com.

### 5464 College Avenue

Proposal: To construct a 235 square-foot ground-floor addition and an 823 square-foot second-story to a one-story commercial structure located at the rear of a property containing two commercial buildings.

Contact: Jeff Doney

Phone: 415/999-8658

Owner: Donatas Januta

Permits Required: Regular Design Review for additions to an existing structure exceeding 1,000 square-feet in floor area.

Historic Status: Potential Designated Historic Property; Survey Rating: C2+

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

### 5649 Buena Vista Avenue

Proposal: To construct a deck and a stucco wall fence at a single-family residence.

Contact: William Lyons Architect

Phone: 510/444-6229

Owners: Dragan Simikic & Alice Robinson-Simikic

Permits Required: Regular Design Review for a new attached 320 square foot, 13 feet high max. stucco deck and a 6 feet high max. stucco wall fence along the west and southwest property line located in the R-30 Zone; Minor Variance to allow a street side yard setback of 6 feet where 10 feet is required for a portion of the deck (northwest side) and a rear yard setback of 1 foot where 20 feet is required for a portion of the deck (west side)

Case Planner: Mike Rivera at 510/238-6417 or mrivera@oaklandnet.com

### 5436 Broadway

Proposal: To construct a 662 square foot upper story addition to an existing single family home.

Contact: Debbie Kim and Kathy Rogers

Phone: 510/526-2720

Owner: Elizabeth Falkner

Permits Required: Regular Design Review for a new floor area and exterior alterations; Minor Variance to allow a side yard setback of 1 foot, 11 inches where 5 feet is required for new stairs connecting main and upper floors

Case Planner: Holly Pearson at 510/238-3079 or hpearson@oaklandnet.com

**RCPC Land Use Committee**

**The RCPC Land Use Committee meets the fourth Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m., at the Rockridge Library.**
**Next meeting: Wednesday, May 27, 2009**

# Land Use Update

*by Stuart Flashman,*
*RCPC Land Use Committee chair*

### ■ Red Oak Realty (5915 College Avenue – Dreyer's Building)

Red Oak Realty's application to move its Oakland office into the 4,000 square foot space formerly occupied by Cotton & Co. has tentatively been set for hearing on June 3 by the Planning Commission. (Visit RCPC's Web site at www.rockridge.org for future updates. Also, sign up at the site for the RCPC e-news to receive information via e-mail.) RCPC is still in discussion with Red Oak to see if it's possible to identify a mutually acceptable solution that would keep the College Avenue frontage in retail use. RCPC has also circulated a petition to College Avenue merchants in support of keeping ground floor College Avenue space in retail use.

Plan to attend the June 3 commission hearing and let the commissioners know that Rockridge residents want to protect our successful retail district. Planning Commission meetings are held at Oakland City Hall, One Frank H. Ogawa Plaza (between 14th and 15th Streets at Clay Street), Hearing Room No. 1, starting at 6 p.m. The planner is Dave Valeska (510/238-2075, DValeska@oaklandnet.com).

### ■ College Avenue Safeway Rebuild (6310 College Avenue at Claremont)

Safeway presented its latest plans for revamping its College Avenue store at a public meeting held April 29. At this writing, RCPC has not officially seen the plans, but they apparently still call for a 50,000 square foot store plus a series of small shops fronting on College Avenue. Small shops may be nice, but adding a 50,000 square foot big box store will almost certainly generate traffic levels far beyond what College Avenue can handle. At this point, RCPC remains firmly opposed to this oversized project. Visit the RCPC Web site at www.rockridge.org for further updates. The planner is Peterson Vollman (510/238-6167, pvollman@oaklandnet.com).

**Correction:** Local architects did not present their alternative plans to Safeway's new architect when they met with him last month, as was reported in The Rockridge News June issue. Instead, they presented a compilation of the community's concerns about the project.

#### Land Use Meeting Agendas

Contact Stu Flashman at 652-5373 or chair@rockridge.org for a copy of the current Land Use Committee meeting agenda.

### ■ Rockridge Montessori Expansion Project (5616 Broadway)

Contrary to some current rumors, the planning application by this school for a further expansion to over 200 students has not been withdrawn. No decision has been made on the level of environmental review to be required, but RCPC continues to be concerned about potential traffic and pedestrian safety impacts of the project, and the creeping encroachment of a commercial use into the adjacent residential area. The assigned planner is Ulla Jonsson (510/238-3322, ujonsson@oaklandnet.com). RCPC will continue to follow developments.

### ■ 6000 College Avenue (Corner of Harwood) – Winebar/ Restaurant Proposal

An application has been submitted for an Italian winebar/restaurant in this renovated retail space formerly occupied by a children's furnishings store. It would be patterned after the successful Vinoroso bistro in San Francisco, and would have wine tasting and serve light cuisine.

The RCPC board will review the application at its May 7 meeting. Possible concerns are:

- hours of operation (evenings only on weekdays).
- addition of yet another restaurant on College.
- proximity to the existing liquor license at Barclay's and the College Avenue Presbyterian Church across the street.

Please send comments to chair@rockridge.org or leave voicemail at 869-4200.

Land Use Committee, page 12

# Make Rockridge Greener: Take a Walk

*by Laurie Leiber*

Listening to NPR a couple of weeks ago, I heard six brilliant and articulate experts debate the question, "Is reducing carbon emissions worth the cost?" They argued for and against the motion for the better part of an hour. At no time did anyone question the urgent need to address the crisis of climate change, only *how* it should be done.

How indeed? While I won't add much to what national and international policy experts have to say, I do have a suggestion for how Rockridge residents can reduce our contribution to global warming while simultaneously supporting local businesses and improving our health and well-being; walk.

I didn't come by this brilliant notion easily. I broke my shoulder last spring and was unable to drive for several months. Forced out of my car, I ultimately came to appreciate just how much I could get done on foot. Now that I've got the habit I'm never going back.

The grand opening gift from Pharmaca helped. The soft, green shopping bag zips into a compact rectangle that fits easily into my purse or pocket. Even while limited to one arm, I could walk to do many of my errands with the help of this handy shopping bag. At the same time, I got a modest amount of exercise, and spent money in my immediate neighborhood.

At first, I stayed within a few blocks of my house. But, as my range gradually began to expand, I felt limited by the amount of stuff I could carry. I could only walk as far as I was willing and able to schlep my inevitable purchases home with me. Acquisition of a wheeled, wire shopping basket has proved a near perfect solution. As long as I don't overfill my cart, I can free range all over with impunity.

My new system works so well, I'm frankly surprised I don't see more of my neighbors out there pulling carts. Do people have to break their arms to realize the multiple rewards of shopping on foot? In one fell swoop I can reduce greenhouse emissions, save money, burn calories, and lower my blood pressure—all while sustaining local businesses.

I have my suspicions as to why I see so few Rockridge residents pulling shopping carts. I think we are dealing with psychological resistance. It's true, even I refer to my trusty rolling basket as a "granny cart." And, although I was careful to buy a solid black basket, I have to admit it was merely the least dorky of those on sale. People aren't out there saving the planet by walking to do their errands because dragging a "granny cart" doesn't look cool.

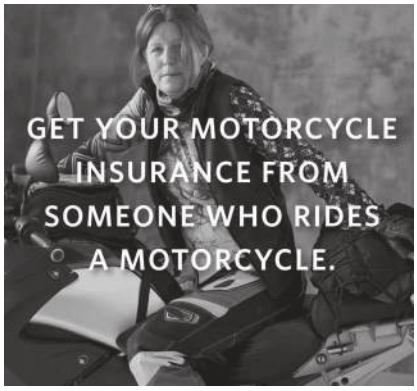
I think we need to reframe the question. "Is reducing carbon emissions worth looking a little goofy while out doing your shopping?" Let's all say yes!

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Laurie Leiber is a Rockridge resident who teaches Pilates at her home.

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# Touching the Earth

## Earth Day

It's Earth Day celebration time again and this year in particular communities everywhere are trying to "outgreen" each other. It's probably overkill, but I'm so glad it's happening. The time is long overdue for us to reorder our priorities and recognize our natural environment as *the* source of information about the universe and ourselves, about sustainability, healing, learning, spirituality, in short, everything we need to know to live well.

## A Possum Crosses Claremont Avenue

I almost hit it. It wasn't in a hurry to cross the street. Seemed like it thought it had the right of way. After all, the animals were there before we came into the neighborhood. So were the trees and the creeks and the birds, and the farmers who planted their food right here in Rockridge where they built their homes. Since then we have done a pretty good job of sending the farmers packing and encasing everything else in concrete. We haven't totally destroyed it, but just as in fairy tales of yore, the secret has been locked away and the key has been lost. In the fairy tales, misery and famine then spread over the land until someone pure of heart comes along to break the spell. She does it by simply touching the earth with mindfulness and all springs back to life. Better to look

THE Rockridge MUSE

*by Ortrun Niesar*

for small miracles.

## Breaking Through

I think of our obsession to cover up the planet with concrete and asphalt as a symptom of our general disconnect with nature and our gross misunderstanding or disregard of our necessary relationship to our environment. It is also a major contributor to global warming, food and habitat shortage, not to mention scraped knees. All the more meaningful that a school has torn up at least a little patch of asphalt so that the kids have a place to touch the earth directly with their bare feet if they want.

Consider the wall of Claremont Middle School facing College Avenue. At first, it looked as forbidding as the Great Wall of China. Then, over the years, some paint and messages appeared on the wall to let people know what's behind it or under it. Still, a disconnect for most passers-by.

But then, one day this spring, like a bouquet of flowers, a whole orchestra appeared on the lawn in front of the wall. It prompted me to find out what was on the other side of the wall. No, it's not asphalt. It is a garden, a wonderful garden, a sanctuary where young minds can explore their connection to the natural environment. Islands of flowers and vegetables intertwine with welcoming outdoor meeting places, inviting communal interaction. No concrete benches here, just tree stumps to climb up on. Close your eyes and you're in summer camp!

Thank you to all who bring gardens to the schools.

## Our Gardens: Small Wonders

There used to be orchards here, but they are long gone, together with the farmers who tended them. Today, Rockridge gardens are generally kind of small, but at least we are lucky enough to have them. It's where we can touch the earth with our feet, feel the organic quality of the living earth and connect to what was here before. Treat it kindly and it will yield abundant good health, good food, good spirits and mindboggling beauty.

By our house, we wait for the asparagus spears to appear voluntarily each spring; for the apricot tree to yield its fruit in the summer for dozens of jars of jam. We plant sunflowers to help the bees, and parsley and radishes for ourselves. Hummingbirds stop by to drink the nectar from the bougainvillea. The apple tree on the parking strip must be spreading its roots deep and very wide to reach water from the creek buried somewhere near here; how else to explain the bushels of apples it produces every year, enough to feed the whole neighborhood. Its roots are strong enough to lift the concrete sidewalk slabs like they were made of straw. It's a miracle.

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**Post Script**: Thank you to Beth Waitkus (bethwaitkus@earthlink.net) for spearheading the garden program at San Quentin, www.insightgardenprogram.org.) She can use help.

Books to read: Patricia Klindienst, *The Earth Knows My Name*; Robert Kourik, *Roots Demystified*; Barbara Kingsolver, *Small Wonder.*

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Ortrun Niesar can be reached at oniesar@sbcglobal.net.

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# RCPC Takes BART to Task on Project Noise

*by Stuart Flashman, chair, RCPC*

Rockridge residents have, since January, become familiar with the routine annoyances associated with the seismic retrofit project at the Rockridge BART station. Blocked sidewalks, coned-off traffic lanes, missing spaces in the BART parking lot, giant trucks full of construction debris – they've all had to be accepted as a necessary part of protecting BART and area residents from major post-earthquake damage.

The construction noise, however, has often been almost unbearable. It's also violated BART's own construction site regulations. RCPC brought the problem to BART's attention, and changes for the better can already be seen and (not) heard.

When BART put forward its plans for the seismic retrofit project several years ago, federal law required the agency to consider and to mitigate the project's environmental impacts. One mitigation required that sound levels be limited and barriers be in place in particularly noisy work areas. BART was granted a legislative exemption from state environmental law (the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)), premised on the agency's promise to alleviate project impacts.

When construction began, however, the contractor was apparently unaware of the sound level requirements. The project involves removing and replacing large sections of the subterranean concrete supports for the pillars supporting BART's elevated structures. Breaking up concrete is noisy work; the only barriers installed were sheets of green canvas partially surrounding the construction sites.

BART had promised to keep sound levels below 85 decibels (dB). RCPC measured construction sound levels at the nearby AC Transit bus stop on the east side of College Avenue at above 90 dB. Sound levels along the pedestrian walkway BART had opened on the west side of the station to replace barricaded sidewalk areas were even higher – above 95 dB.




**After RCPC identified dangerously high sound levels at BART's construction site, the agency posted this sign.**
Photo: Stuart Flashman

RCPC brought the matter to BART's attention in late February, and used the California Public Records Act to obtain copies of the sound measurements made by BART's contractor. The records also showed the regulations were being violated.

BART has begun to change the contractor's behavior, and the results are evident. Sound barriers have been placed around noise-intensive operations. At least one piece of equipment not meeting BART's construction regulations has been banished.

RCPC will continue to monitor sound levels at the BART retrofit construction site, especially as the work moves closer to Claremont Middle School and residences.

# AC Transit Studies Changes for 51 Line




**Should the 51 bus line be split? AC Transit wants to hear what the public thinks about its proposals.** Photo: Don Kinkead

*by Ronnie Spitzer, chair, Transportation, Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety committee*

## Agency Wants Input

AC Transit Line 51 links our neighborhood with downtown Oakland, Alameda, UC Berkeley and the Berkeley Amtrak station from 5 a.m. to midnight. At 13 miles, it is one of the longest routes in the system. Its length is one of the factors that make the route subject to late buses, slow service and bus bunching. AC Transit has prepared recommendations for service changes to address these problems. The agency has extended the public comment

Changes to 51 Bus?, page 13

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# Teen Zone Planned for Rockridge Branch Library

*by Bill Kaufner, RCPC boardmember*

Exciting changes are in the planning stages for the Rockridge Branch Library. On April 2, Oakland Main Library staff, Rockridge Library staff, and members of the Nolan-Tam architectural firm met with community members to brainstorm ideas for a teen zone. This teen zone, the second in Oakland, would be modeled after the new TeenZone at the Oakland Main Library. City Council President Jane Brunner has secured seed money to help create a dedicated space for teens with appropriate teen literature, computers, and activities at the Rockridge Branch.

While the branch has an adult section and a children's section, only a small space is dedicated to teens. Library staff surveyed 60 adult patrons and 30 teen patrons to gather information relevant to each group's needs and library usage.

Community members at the meeting welcomed the prospect of a teen zone that would result in a better library atmosphere for all patrons, and an enhanced educational experience for teens.

More community meetings are planned and will be announced on the RCPC Web site, www.rockridge.org, and in The Rockridge News.

Planners say project design would run through December, 2009, the project would go to bid in spring 2010, and remodeling would begin that summer.

To see an example of a successful teen zone in action, visit the TeenZone at the Main Library, 125 14th Street. The library's Web site has more information and a picture of the TeenZone: http://www.oaklandlibrary.org/Seasonal/Sections/teen_zone.html.

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## Ask a Cop

This month, The Rockridge News initiates the "Ask a Cop" column which will provide a question-and-answer format for Rockridge Problem Solving Officers to answer residents' law enforcement and crime-related questions.

Proposed by PSOs Chew and Gerrans in the hope of improving communications and involving residents in the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) activities, the column depends on your participation. Send your questions to editor@rockridge.org.

**Greetings, Readers:**

Our names are Officer Chew and Officer Gerrans. We are Problem Solving Officers (P.S.O.) for the Oakland Police Department. Officer Gerrans is currently the P.S.O. for beat 12Y and Officer Chew is the P.S.O. for beat 13X. Both of these beats encompass the Rockridge neighborhood area.

We are interested in fielding questions you may have and look forward to opening up a dialogue with the whole community.

**Ask-A-Cop Questions, May, 2009**

1. What are the responsibilities and the differences for the PSO officer compared to the Beat Officer? — *E. Galimba*
2. Where should I call if I see a crime in progress? Where should I call to report a crime against me (burglary, mugging, car theft?) — *S. Rainolds*

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# Tips for Bike to Work Day

*by Ronnie Spitzer, chair, RCPC Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Committee*

Join thousands of cyclists from around the Bay and ride your bike to work! The San Francisco Bay Area's 15th annual Bike to Work Day takes place Thursday, May 14, as part of National Bike Month. Bike riding is healthy, economical, reduces traffic and is environmentally-friendly. For more information, see http://btwd.bayareabikes.org/

### Bike Commute Tips

If you haven't biked in a while or are new to biking to work:

- Check out your route in advance.
- Make sure your bike is reasonably well tuned and your helmet fits.
- Wear comfortable clothing.
- Obey all traffic laws including stop signs and red lights.
- Ride predictably, visibly and safely.
- Get an early start.
- If you're planning to mix bike and transit, be aware of BART bike restriction periods (mornings and evenings in the "commute direction"), and that AC Transit bus bike racks may be fuller than usual on Bike to Work Day. Leave extra time. Check BART's Web site at http://www.bart.gov/guide/bikes/bikeRules.aspx for bike rules.

### Bicycle Coalition Offers Bike Safety Classes

Free East Bay Bicycle Coalition urban bicycle safety classes are offered in May and June to teach you how to safely share the road. To sign up, go to http://www.ebbc.org/safety.

This article is partially based on the Oakland Public Works department's bike to work day Web page: http://www.oaklandpw.com/page125.aspx.

# Claremont Invites All to its Spring Festival



**Claremont Middle School creates a carnival midway on the schoool playground to celebrate its Spring Festival, and invites the community join in.**

PHOTO: MIKE MAGES

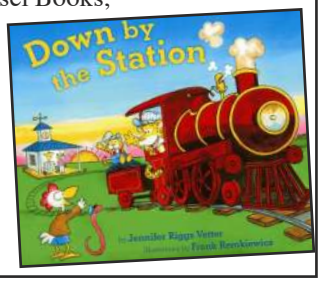
Come join us from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 30, at Claremont Middle School, 5750 College Avenue (at Birch Court) for our annual Spring Fling, a county fair-style celebration featuring carnival games, food booths, arts and crafts activities, music performances, henna art, face-painting, and even a petting zoo! Test your hammer strength at the Hi-Striker, pet the pot-bellied pig, try your hand at Spin Art, enjoy the sounds of different student bands, shop for handicrafts, or eat your way down in the midway. There's something for everyone!

The Spring Fling is organized by the Claremont PTA as an end-of-year party and a benefit for school programs. Last year's event raised about $2,000 for the 6th grade field trip to Point Bonita, the 7th grade Yosemite trip, 8th grade promotion activities, the music program, a sports award banquet, and more. Game tickets cost 50 cents each; the number of tickets varies by game. Food sales are by cash. For more information about the Spring Fling or donation opportunities, please call Becki Couch-Alvarado at 510/541-1545.

— *Julie Harris*

# Rockridge Resident Publishes Children's Book

Rockridge resident Jennifer Vetter reads her first children's book, a modern telling of a venerable rhyming song at Diesel Books, May 5, 7 p.m. The Rockridge News will have a review next month.




# Bore Settlement

from page 1

remont Middle School.

Of the funds, $2 million comes from the state Air Resources Board for specialized air-filtration systems of all buildings and classrooms at Chabot Elementary and Claremont Middle schools.

An additional $1 million grant was provided by CalFire's Urban Forestry Program to pay for trees to be planted to reduce the effects of noise from increased traffic expected to occur after construction of the new tunnel bore.

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Photo: Don Kinkead

## The Neighborhood Merchant

by Theresa Nelson

# Atomic Garden

### A Very Green (Atomic) Garden

Atomic Garden goes beyond being green to incorporating sustainability and recycled materials in almost everything it carries, and even to the store itself. Formerly a printing business, the space was transformed using wood and old floorboards reclaimed from a family farm in Penngrove, and an old canning cupboard got a new life as a display cabinet. The one-of-a kind birdhouses, wall art and mirrors on display were created by the man whose family owned the farm.

Co-owner Jamie Kidson told me that she and Adrienne Armstrong had been clothing designers with their own lines, and found they shared values about focusing on quality instead of quantity. They believe it's important to know how and where fabrics were manufactured, who made them and whether they had fair pay and working conditions. When they found the current Atomic Garden space, they decided to open a store instead of designing and manufacturing their own clothing line. Both live in the neighborhood, and walking to work allows them to exercise their philosophy of sustainability and low-impact on the community.

Most items in the store include some element of sustainability or recycled materials: Old restaurant dishes are transformed into new dinnerware with reglazing; hemp linens made in Transylvania in the '30s and '40s have been refashioned into dish towels and table runners which grow softer with each washing. Atomic Garden socks are made from recycled cotton scraps which have been ground and respun into new fibers. One unusual item is the compostable umbrella, created when the designer saw how many broken umbrellas were discarded. Made of plant-based plastic, bamboo and string, it's really waterproof, and after five years of use is fully compostable.

Newer items are made by people who follow the fair trade, fair wage, health-conscious, recycling philosophy. The stainless steel water bottles won't leach pieces of internal coating into the liquid. The stunning black clay pots from La Chamba are handmade, non-toxic and have no glazes, instead being naturally finished by stone polishing. For use on stovetop or oven, they range in size from small bowls to large casserole dishes. Beautiful cards by Linea Carta are printed on an old letterpress on recycled paper with soy inks.

Clothing follows the same sustainable philosophy. Local designer Calliope makes children's dresses and shirts from leftover fabrics, and Stewart Brown uses organic cotton in his basic tank dresses and tops. In Dosa's popular line, all the fabrics are recycled; even leftover pattern pieces are saved and re-used. A handmade little black dress gets its beautiful texture from its many fabric pieces. Their shawls are lovely: fabric scraps encased in light, see-through muslin look almost like stained glass. Prairie Underground of Seattle offers long and short-zippered hoodies with fascinating details and a romantic, cloak-like hood that is quite stylish.

Matt Bernson shoes, made in Brazil with nontoxic dyes, are available in silver or pewter-colored flats and multi-metal-toned sandals with soft, cushioned soles. Also made from recycled plastics are Melissa's mary janes and clogs, in bright and shiny black, red and forest green, and Gypsy Style totes and laundry bags with brilliant stripes.

Lovely purses by rubyzaar come as popular belt bags or classic shoulder bags. Produced in fair trade partnership in Southeast Asia, the leathers come from an organic farm in Thailand using hides from animals which expired of natural causes, cured only by smoke or plant extracts, hand tooled by craftsmen and women.

If you believe in buying sustainable, fair trade and fair wage items that are also beautiful, be sure to stop by Atomic Garden.

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| 3/31/2009 | 3/2 | 6016 Broadway | $548,000 | 18 | $548,000 | $558,000 |
| 4/1/2009 | 3/2.5 | 43 Clarewood Lane | $649,000 | 11 | $649,000 | $638,655 |
| 4/3/2009 | 3/2 | 5334 Miles Avenue | $879,000 | 21 | $849,000 | $813,000 |
| 3/25/2009 | 5/2.5 | 5602 Taft Avenue | $850,000 | 4 | $850,000 | $850,000 |
| 3/25/2009 | 4/2.5 | 7101 Chabot Road | $1,125,000 | 8 | $899,000 | $940,000 |

The average market time has decreased by 57% compared to this time last year.
1/3 of the home sales in Rockridge last month Sold for over the asking price.
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# Land Use Committee

from page 5

■ **College Preparatory School Facilities Master Plan (6100 Broadway)**

**Reminder:** CPS and RCPC are jointly sponsoring a neighborhood meeting about the school's proposal to construct about 20,000 square feet of classroom and theatre space, spread out over the next 10 to 15 years. Some of the construction will replace buildings to be demolished.

The meeting is at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 6, in the Smith Room on the CPS campus, 6100 Broadway. (Details in last month's Rockridge News Land Use Update, page 5.)

# Kitchen Tour Call

from page 1

Kitchen Tour, but can't volunteer your time, our kitchen tour brochure provides local merchants, real estate brokers, builders, architects, designers, decorators, and other residential home decoration professionals with an opportunity to reach an interested and enthusiastic audience. For more information about tour brochure advertising space contact Jo Ellis at 510/653-3210, after noon.

Take your mind off the global slump and enjoy an afternoon with your neighbors, in our thriving Rockridge community. Ticket sales will begin in June at www.rockridge.org. As a guest, a docent or a tour volunteer, on September 20, the Rockridge Kitchen Tour is the place to be!

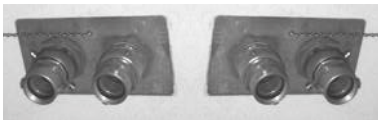
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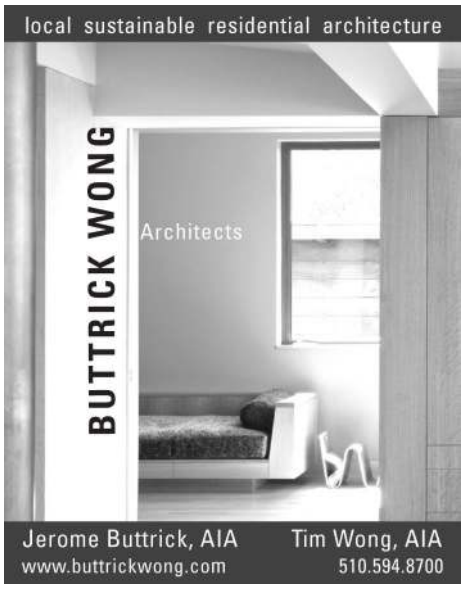
from page 4

recyclables on my street are careful to be quiet early in the morning and always clean up after themselves. Why? Because I have made a point of recognizing them and saying hello; not overly friendly, just letting them know that I will treat them like people if they do the same.

They know that if they breach that trust I will make sure they're out of there.

***— Len Lauro***



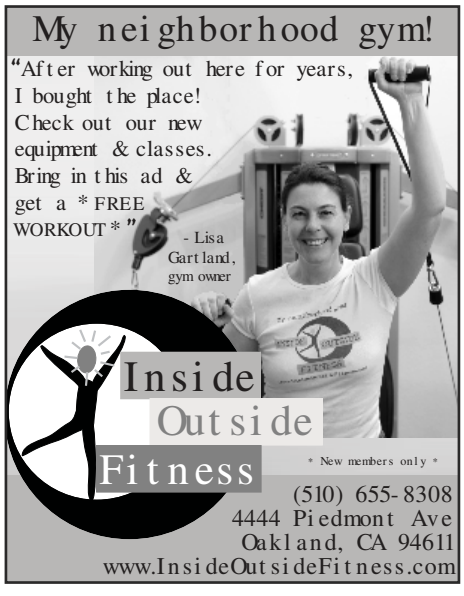

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# Changes to 51 Bus?

**from page 8**

period specifically to allow more neighbors in the Piedmont Avenue, Temescal and Rockridge districts to weigh in.

### The Service and the Problems

The 51 line carries 19,000 riders per day, connecting them with:

- Four BART stations.
- One Amtrak station.
- Thirty AC Transit routes, including six transbay, 22 local and two Rapid bus lines.

System-wide, buses average a speed of nearly 12 miles per hour. Line 51 averages nine mph; even an increase to 10.5 mph would be very noticeable. Buses are normally moving only 52 percent of the time. They "dwell" at stops 20 percent of the time, but are just plain delayed even more time: 28 percent. Delays are commonly caused by narrow streets, uncontrolled pedestrian crossings or turning vehicles. Dwell time is increased by passengers exiting via the front door, insufficient red curb, blocked loading zones and sidewalk hazards. Boarding takes three seconds per passenger; paying fares adds to that.

### The Proposals

With the participation of a task force, AC Transit proposes the following choices to address service problems.

Improvements would be sought through operational changes; improvements to roads, traffic and pedestrian signals; bus zones; and line configurations.

Line changes under consideration are:

- Split route. The route would be shortened by splitting it into two lines. Transfers would be needed by riders traveling beyond the split point. Proposed split points are at Rockridge BART, at downtown Oakland, or at the MacArthur BART station on a revised route. This choice would make Rockridge's connection to either Berkeley (live south of BART station) or downtown Oakland (live north of BART station) a two-bus trip.
- A/B service would divide the stops into alternating groups. Route 51A buses would stop at the current 1st, 3rd, 5th stops, etc., and 51B buses at the 2nd, 4th, 6th, etc. Both A and B buses would stop at select transfer points. This method has been used in some other dense urban cities.
- A Limited/Local combination would add some buses, which stop at only selected locations. The route is now purely local.
- A fourth option: make no changes.

Fully half of Rockridge would be impacted by a split at the Rockridge station, with transfer timing and charges undetermined at this point. The RCPC board would like the community's input on which proposals it should support. Neighbors may download a report with maps at www.actransit. org (look under Planning Focus, then under Projects in the Works). Send your comments to Puja K. Sarna at psarna@actransit.org or call her at 510/891-4867. Please copy Ronnie Spitzer, TPBS Chair, at Ronnie@rockridge.org.

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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. **Compiled by Jo Ellis**

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)

Residents and business members of NCPC's 12Y and 13X areas are invited to voice their concerns about crime and public safety, 4th Thursday each month, 7 to 8:30pm. Rockridge Library, upstairs meeting room, 5366 College Ave. info@rockridgencpc.com or infofordenise@yahoo.com.

## Rockridge Branch Library

5366 College Avenue, 597-5017

**FOR CHILDREN:**

- **Toddler Story Time:** Every Saturday, 10:30am.
- **Pre-School Story Time:** 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 10:30am.
- **New additional Baby and Toddler Story Time:** 1st and 3rd Wednesday, 10:30am, **upstairs Community Room (same days and times as Pre-School Story Time**).
- **Pajama Story Time**: 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 7 pm (see special events below).

**SPECIAL EVENTS FOR CHILDREN:**

- **Moms, Pops and Pop-ups Pajama Story Time**: Stories to celebrate our families, then, a pop-up card-making party. Tues., 5/12, 7pm.
- **May Pajama Story Time**: stories of Asia and the Pacific Islands. Afterwards, make a scroll-painting to hang at home. Tues., 5/26, 7pm.

**FOR TEENS:**

- **Rockridge Ninjas (Anime Club): Teens 13 and up**, watch and talk about anime (Japanese animation) with other teens. Second Tuesday each month (5/12), 5 to 6:30pm, upstairs meeting rm.

**FOR ADULTS:**

- **Writers' Support/Critique Group**: ALL writers welcome. Bring 12 copies of up to 5 double-spaced pages of prose for on-site reading/discussion. 3rd Saturday each month, 1-5pm. Sponsored by the California Writers Club, Berkeley branch (www.berkeleywritersclub.org.) Info: 420-8775 or Writefox@aol.com.
- **Knitting Classes for Seniors** (50+): In collaboration with 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. **Every Tuesday**, 12:30-2:30pm, upstairs meeting room. **NOTE: DUE TO SCHOOL BUDGET CUTS, MAY WILL BE THE LAST MONTH FOR THE KNITTING CLASS.**
- **Lawyers in the Library:** Free legal advice. First Tuesday each month from 6 to 8pm. Advance sign-up starts 5pm. More info: 597-5017.

**ART EXHIBITS**

Gallery: May: **Merritt College Students**: Figure and portrait drawings.

June: **Alicia Wallace** and class: Paintings and drawings

**LOBBY DISPLAY CASE:**

May: **Barry Paul**: drawings – color pencil.

June: LGBT Month display.

**LIBRARY HOURS:**

Mon. and Tues, 12:30 to 8pm.
Wed., Thurs. and Sat. 10am to 5:30pm.
Fri., 12 to 5:30pm. Closed Sundays.
Also closed: 5/22, 5/25 and 6/5.

## Diesel Book/Poetry & Events

All events are FREE and open to the public.

- Wed., 5/5, 7pm. Rockridge resident J**ennifer Riggs Vetter**: debut picturebook, *Down By the Station*.
- Mon., 5/11, 7pm. **Amnesty International Meeting**: All invited to exchange ideas on action.
- Tues., 5/12, 7pm. **Russell Howze**: *Stencil Nation: Graffiti, Community, and Art*.
- Thurs., 5/14, 7pm. **Daniel Mendelsohn**: two new translations of C.P. Cavafy's poetry: *C.P. Cavafy: Collected Poems* and *C.P. Cavafy: The Unfinished Poems.*
- Sun., 5/17, 3pm. Book Launch Party for local poet and professor **Barbara Tomash**: *The Secret of White*, along with guest reader **Nona Caspers**.
- Wed., 5/20, 7pm. **Norm Sperling**: The Journal of Irreproducible Results new anthology, *This Book Warps Space and Time*.
- Thurs., 5/21, 7pm. **Anneli Rufus** and **Kristan Lawson**: *The Scavenger's Manifesto*.
- Sun., 5/24, 3pm. **Renee Swindle's students** from her UC Berkeley Extension Novel Writing Workshop will read from their works-in-progress.
- Wed., 5/27, 7pm. Local author **Susan Kuchinskas**: *The Chemistry of Connection*.
- Thurs., 6/4, 7pm. **Elana Dykewomon**: *Risk*.
- Sun., 6/7, 3pm. **Poetry Flash – Lyric Postmodernisms**.

DIESEL, A Bookstore, 5433 College Ave. Info: other events, book groups and El Grupito, Spanish discussion group: 653-9965 or www.dieselbookstore.com.

## Peace Corps Information Night

Learn about volunteering in 76 countries in education, health, business, environment and more. No upper age limit. Tues, 5/26, 6 to 7:30pm, Rockridge Library, 5366 College Ave. Info: Heather Driscoll, 452-8444, sfevents@peacecorps.gov or www.peacecorps.gov.

## Peralta In Bloom

**Peralta Elementary School Spring Community Festival**: Carnival games, 30-foot climbing wall, potted plants; feast on pulled pork sandwiches; live music and more. Proceeds benefit art and music programs, sports, counseling and many other services. Saturday, May 9, noon to 4pm. 460 63rd Street. Parking at St. Augustine's church (across from the school on Alcatraz Ave.). Info: Jen McKillips, jsmckillips@yahoo.com.

## Claremont Middle School Annual Spring Fling

A county fair-style celebration featuring carnival games, arts and crafts, food booths, music and more. Saturday, May 30, 11am to 3 pm, on the school playground, 5750 College (at Birch Ct.). A PTA benefit for school programs. Info: 879-2010. **See article, pg. 10.**

## Wisteria Ways Concert Series

**Wake the Dead**: World's First Celtic All-Star Grateful Dead Jam Band. From Rock to Irish reels, and songs familiar to Deadheads everywhere. Saturday, 5/30, 3pm (house opens at 2:30pm). Outdoor concert (wheelchair accessible): bring something to sit on (blanket or lawn chair), hat, a picnic. $15-20 suggested donation for musicians (cash please at the door).383 61st Street. Info at www.wakethedead.org. Reservations recommended), RSVP to info@WisteriaWays.org or 655-2771.

## Oakland Youth Orchestra Auditions

Membership in this outstanding youth orchestra is open to highly qualified players of all orchestral instruments from Bay Area schools. Generally, students are 12-22 years, but exceptional younger students may also be admitted. Candidates will be heard on Tues., 5/5, 3 – 10pm; Wed., 5/6, 3 – 10pm, and Sat., 5/9, 9am – 12pm at 1428 Alice St., Rm. 202M. Get full details, applications, musical excerpts and directions at www.oyo.org.

## Calif. College Of The Arts (CCA)

**Undergraduate Exhibition Program**: CCA student work, rotating weekly. Receptions every Wed., 5:30-7:30pm. 5212 B'way, Oliver Art Center. Info/hours: 658-1223 (or 1224) or www.cca.edu/students/undergadexhibitions.

## North Oakland Senior Center

Program Highlights: Computer classes; Health Insurance counseling and advocacy program; exercise; trips, tours and theater outings; Alzheimer's Caregivers Support Groups.

- **Living with loss: Free grief support group.** Wednesdays, 2 – 2:30pm, May 6 through June 10.
- **Voter InfoDay**: The League of Woman Voters offers Info about the May 19 special election. Thurs., May 7 (call for times).
- **Brain Fitness – Insight "Visual" Program**: focus better/ improve driving. Registration: Thurs., 5/21, 3pm for class starting June1 through Sept 2. Free tuition for adults 50+ ($25 materials fee).
- Purchase vendor spaces in May for **Big Flea Market on Sat., June 6**, 8am to 4pm. Info: 597-5085.

Hours: Mon. – Fri., 8:45am to 4:45pm. 5714 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. Subscribe to "The North Oakland Senior Times" for a schedule of classes/events and monthly lunch menu ($2.25 to $4.). Details about events, membership, and volunteer opportunities: call 597-5085.

## American Red Cross

- **Mobile Blood Drive**- Donate blood: Fri, 5/8, 8:30am – 1:30pm, at Children's Hospital, Outpatient Center, Basement, 747 52nd St. Call 800-GIVE LIFE (800-448-3543) or go to HelpSaveALife.org (Sponsor Code: CHO) to schedule an appt.
- **Volunteer Orientations**: Tour the Oakland Blood Center. Learn to assist blood donors, deliver blood, help with special projects. 5/6, from 10am-noon; 5/12 and 5/20, 6pm to 8pm. 6230 Claremont Ave. (across from College Ave. Safeway). Learn more or sign up: Anne at 594-5165 or BlackstoneA@usa.redcross.org.

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