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THE Rockridge News

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Sponsored by the Rockridge Community Planning Council • 5245 College Ave. PMB 311 • Oakland, CA 94618 • 869-4200

Joint RCPC-NCPC Town Hall Meeting

☛ AGENDA

April 2010

Thursday, April 8, 7:00 p.m.
Rockridge Branch Library,
5366 College Avenue at Manila,
Community Room (Upstairs)

Note
Special Time and Date

☑ Listen ☑ Learn ☑ Ask ☑ Vote: Community Elections ☑ Plan to Attend



OPD Chief Anthony Batts (Courtesy OPD)

■ **In a joint Town Hall presentation**, RCPC and the Greater Rockridge NCPC (Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council)(beats 12Y and 13X) present Oakland Police Chief Anthony Batts. Chief Batts will discuss law enforcement and crime in Oakland and take questions from the audience in the first hour of the meeting. Come share your questions and concerns regarding crime and public safety in Rockridge.

■ **RCPC, NCPC and FORL (Friends of the Rockridge Library) are holding elections** simultaneous with this meeting. RCPC and FORL will take ballots for their annual elections in the hall near the main meeting room. Following Chief Batts, the NCPC will have a brief election for chair and vice chair, and then conduct its regular meeting with Rockridge's Problem Solving Officers and Neighborhood Services Coordinator. All are invited.

Marathon Runners Swarm Rockridge Streets

Rockridge residents and visitors crowded College Avenue sidewalks Sunday, March 28, to watch and cheer as thousands of marathon runners joined in the Oakland Running Festival, in what has been referred to as its inaugural event. Runners traced College Avenue to Claremont, then doubled back to Keith and up to Broadway.

PHOTO: DON KINKEAD



51 Bus Line Split Takes an Unexpected Turn

Keith and Miles Suddenly on New Route



AC Transit's plan to separate its 51 line into two new routes will send northbound bus traffic up Keith (pictured at its College Avenue intersection) and down Miles for the return leg of the trip. Three metered parking spaces next to Cactus Tacqueria may be converted to a new bus stop. PHOTO: DON KINKEAD

by Andrew Charman, RCPC Transportation Committee chair, and Michael Kan, RCPC boardmember

When AC Transit's 51 line was split into two routes meeting at the Rockridge BART station effective Sunday, March 28, northbound 51A buses traveling along College will turn right onto Keith Avenue, left on Presley Avenue, left on Miles, and left back onto College to begin the southbound portion of the redesigned route. (See details on the Line 51 split at www.rockridge.org or www.actransit.org.)

Local residents were recently informed of the proposed route in a letter from

Bus Route Changes, page 3

Riding for a Reason: Cyclist Looks Forward to Sacramento School Funds Ride



Paul Vetter and supporters.
PHOTO: JENNIFER VETTER

by Paul Vetter, school funds cyclist

I have been a bicyclist for years. I'm one of those quiet zealots who think that bicycles are a great way to get around. It's a fantastic fitness program – free exercise while you commute to work. I have been bugging my patient wife for years now to let me ride a "century" to Sacramento, and her usual annoyingly sensible response is that I should do it with some ride buddies. I was jealous of the guys who did the first ride last year,

Cycling for Schools, page 12

The Backyard Naturalist

Annette Floystrup

Morning in Birdland

As light seeps into the bedroom, my ears come awake to the early morning chorus, which today is particularly raucous – two **Steller's Jays** have decided to settle a friendly argument in the camellia just outside our window. They are magnificent birds, and at 12 to 13 inches, among the largest we see here in Rockridge. Their deep blue and black feathers culminate in a fantastic raised crest on top of their heads. Their morning scolding takes me back to countless mornings in camp listening from the comfort of a cozy sleeping bag as I steel myself to get up in the morning mist and chill.

The morning chatter of dozens of species of smaller birds is overlaid by the loud caws of the biggest birds in our area, the **American Crows**. At almost one pound, and 17 to 21 inches in length, these ebony beauties are hard to miss. Breeding season is in full swing, and they are currently flocking in a combination of mateless floating flocks and already formed family groups. These large omnivores are extremely social; often raising their young cooperatively in groups, and are rarely seen alone. If you are seeing less roadkill in Rockridge, it's the crows doing yeoman's work on cleanup duty. Unfortunately, they are also significant nest predators, and pose a danger to the eggs and young of smaller songbirds.

Food: Wild or Provided?

This year's well-distributed El Niño rains have made for an abundance of natural food sources, and we are seeing birds in far greater numbers than in many years past. There are some populations of less frequently seen birds hanging out in good numbers. **Cedar Waxwings** have been spotted in small flocks just about anywhere pyrocantha and other berry-bearing bushes are found in the neighborhood. These elegant fruit eaters are crested and sleek taupe-colored birds with bright red tips on their secondary wing feathers and bright yellow tips on their tail feathers.



Even the most robust, protected bird feeder may fall prey to a determined juvenile squirrel looking for seeds.

Photo: Annette Floystrup

Bird feeders are a great supplement to natural sources of food, and neighbors in my area have noticed **Pine Siskins**, a relative of **House Finches** and **Gold Finches**, at their feeders. The little streaky brown birds have an unexpected bar of bright yellow on their wings and a splotch of yellow on their rumps. Like all the finches, they are very social, very vocal, and highly entertaining to watch flitting between the bird feeder and the shrubbery. Putting your feeders near bushes gives birds a chance to use their normal feeding patterns of gathering food and taking it to a hidden place to eat.

Backyard Birder, page 12

Project FeederWatch

Bird feeders provide endless entertainment for the cost of some quality seed, and benefit wild birds by providing a reliable food source. Annual back yard bird counts take advantage of this fact to track bird population fluctuations from year to year.

While this year's Project FeederWatch draws to a close April 9, now is the time to register to participate in the 2010-11 season, which begins November 13. Registration is $15, which goes to support the research of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

The Cornell Lab Web site has extensive information on all things bird. You can listen to bird calls and get a wealth of information on individual birds at http://www.birds.cornell.edu/. By participating, you assist studies on the effects of climate change and global warming.

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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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- Want to volunteer to be a ***Rockridge News*** block captain?
- Would you like to write a letter to the Editor?

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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.

Newsletter Advertising/Deadlines
Publication date of the next issue is
- **May 8, 2010**
- **May deadline is April 22, 2010.**

Advertising rates are $26/column inch. Six-month pre-pay rate available. For display ads, call Jo Ellis at 653-3210 (after noon), or e-mail joellis1@hotmail.com. *RCPC reserves the right to refuse any display or classified ad that it deems inappropriate. (Classified ad contact, page 14.)*

RCPC Land Use Committee

The RCPC Land Use Committee meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Next meeting: April 22. Rockridge Branch Library, Upstairs Meeting Room: 7:30 p.m.

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.

The Land Use Committee did not meet in March. A report in The Rockridge News will follow the April meeting.

Bus Route Changes

from page 1

AC Transit. Many residents along Keith, Presley, and Miles Avenues were troubled by the potential effects of traffic, noise, mechanical vibration, road damage, and pedestrian safety, as well as the perceived lack of adequate notice by AC Transit and the lack of opportunity for public comment. Resident Michael Weiss said, "This is not a well thought out solution to AC Transit's budget issues, and it will certainly infuriate the residents, who already suffer for the location."

Responding to resident's concerns, Zac Wald, chief of staff for City Council President Jane Brunner, promptly organized and hosted a meeting to bring together Rockridge residents, representatives from RCPC and RDA, BART board member Bob Franklin, Oakland Transportation Services staff with AC Transit Director-at-Large Chris Peeples, Deputy Director Nancy Skowbo, and several Transit Service Development staff.

The meeting offered an opportunity for a frank discussion of residents' concerns and AC Transit's efforts to address them. Residents on lower Keith, in particular, feared the buses would exacerbate existing traffic and noise problems stemming from the BART parking lots and the avenue's heavy use as a feeder to Highway 24. They also expressed frustration that residents had not been informed or consulted at an earlier stage of the routing and scheduling decisions. Residents sought adoption of an alternate route, or for AC Transit to sign on to a contractual guarantee to pay for any damage to their homes, streets, or underlying infrastructure such as sewage lines.

AC Transit described its reasons for choosing to split the 51 line at the Rockridge BART station, despite concerns raised last year by several Rockridge residents and the RCPC, saying the intention was to create a more dependable route for the nearly 19,000 passengers that ride this route every day. AC Transit noted that Rockridge BART is located about midway along the current 51 route, and just south of the segment most prone to causing bus delays and bunching, along College Avenue in Berkeley. Splitting the route at BART is intended to create the most reliable and improved route. Company representatives explained that concerns over congestion and equity suggested that the Miles-Forest-Shafter circuit should not be used by the 51A buses, as lines 51B and 49 (the replacement for the existing 7 line) will use that routing.

Although the split of the 51 line at Rockridge (and other locations) was discussed in public meetings and documents last year, AC Transit admitted that the specifics of the route the buses would use to turn around were buried in an obscure appendix. It also acknowledged shortcomings in the public notice for the proposed changes, stemming in part from the fact that Keith Avenue was included on a list of streets with already existing bus service, namely the 59 line, which, however, passes by approximately every hour, in contrast to every eight minutes or so for the planned 51A buses.



These three metered parking spaces on Keith Avenue near Cactus Taqueria may be converted to a bus stop now that AC Transit has reconfigured the 51 line. Photo: Don Kinkead

"It is outrageous that AC Transit should be allowed to make a change with such a drastic impact on residents without advance notification and an opportunity for public comment. A notice informing us of what sounds like a done deal, and merely two weeks ahead of time, is just plain wrong," said resident Karisa Bohon.

AC Transit did not address the contractual guarantee against possible damage, but pledged to look into interim solutions more palatable to local residents, possibly involving routes through BART parking lots, which would involve only short segments along Keith, Miles, and Shafter. Company representatives also pledged in the longer term to find routes which neither utilize Keith Avenue nor unfairly impact other residential streets by June 2010. One suggestion was to make use of the Claremont-College intersection, although how that might work was not immediately evident. Interim adjustments may be made as soon as possible, while permanent route changes to avoid Keith will take place with the summer bus driver sign-up, at the end of June. Proposals for both the interim and long-term options will be discussed at a follow-up meeting in early April.

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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.

Keep Neighborhood Services Coordinators; Control Crime

Editor:

[Following is a copy of a letter sent to City Council President Jane Brunner and to The Rockridge News. — Ed.]

Dear Council President Brunner:

I heard some very distressing news that the City Council is considering eliminating the Neighborhood Services Division including the Neighborhood Services Coordinators as part of its efforts to help resolve the outrageous City budget deficit.

As the acting chair of the Greater Rockridge NCPC (Beats 12Y & 13X), I feel that it is my obligation to insist that you do whatever you can to make sure that this does not happen. The NSCs are the backbone of the NCPCs and are invaluable in assisting Oakland residents in matters of reducing crime and increasing public safety. In spite of the budget deficit, now is not the time to sacrifice our public safety in order to save a few dollars. Eliminating the Neighborhood Services Division would fly in the face of Chief Anthony Batts' recently announced Strategic Framework for the city of Oakland and would put the future of the NCPC program in jeopardy.

Please let me know when the City Council intends to take up this issue so I can make sure that my fellow NCPC chairs, officers and residents can press our case for keeping the NSD intact.

— Frank J. Castro, Acting Chair
Greater Rockridge NCPC
Beats 12Y & 13X

Again – No Rockridge CBD!

Editor:

[Following is a copy of a letter sent to City Council President Jane Brunner and to The Rockridge News. — Ed.]

Dear Council President Brunner:

Our strong coalition of College Avenue small property owners continues to closely monitor the activities of the Rockridge BID (Business Improvement District) and its management corporation, the RDA (Rockridge District Association). We remain very disturbed with the continued attempts to undermine our August 2009 unanimous vote against the formation of a CBD (Community Benefit District), as evidenced by the on-going efforts to populate the RDA board with allies and others helpful to the large property/business owner interests.

For example, rather than recruiting independent, ground-level, store-front retail, business-owner merchants, those who define College Avenue and its success and those whom the RDA exists to assist and promote, the four proposed new RDA board members instead are:

1) a large multi-national corporate property owner representative, Elizabeth Armstrong, who runs the Dreyer's Ice Cream Parlor, and whose employer was the sole vote in favor of the CBD;

2) commercial finance and land use expert, Joe Garrett, a principal of Garrett & Watts, a national real estate lending/mortgage banking advisory firm, and who served on the Berkeley Planning Commission and the Berkeley Redevelopment Agency;

3) an employee of an absentee-owned business, Grant Outerbridge, whose employer, Diesel Books, is both a long-term tenant of and a co-tenant of RDA executive board members, and who will not be voting his own money;

4) another non-merchant resident with development experience, Matthew Krohn, a commercial properties manager and Realtor who hangs his license at, but does not have a desk at, Caldecott Properties which is located on Broadway, not College Avenue.

Additionally, we note that of the five board members up for re-election to two-year terms, one is a neighborhood resident who is an advocate of high density development; two others pay only $60 assessments as "upstairs" people; another doesn't vote her own money as the branch manager of a savings and loan; and only one is an actual ground level merchant/business owner. This is also similar to the composition of current board members with one year remaining terms.

The RDA specifically changed its by-laws to minimize merchant involvement and maximize these corporate, so-called community at large and other non-merchants seats, and did so, clearly with the purpose of proceeding with their single-purpose agenda of forming a CBD. Please be certain: The College Avenue Property Owners do not want a CBD, and resoundingly voted it down.

How many times must a large number of smaller parcel owners defend themselves against the pressure and politics of a very few large parcel owners?

— Tim Martini and
Larry & Anne Olund
for the College Avenue
Property Owners
Against the CBD

P S: We have learned from our own research that the RDA board improperly used approximately $50,000 of the merchants' assessment money without the merchants' knowledge for the failed CBD attempt. Those small merchants are our tenants and we would like to see that their money is returned to them.

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More... Letters to the Editor

No Students at Studio One? Look at the Costs to Attend!

Editor:

I'm an artist and painter living in Temescal. The reason that the Studio One art center lacks students [The Muse, Rockridge News, March 2010] is obvious: How about the outrageous costs of the classes?

Once affordable to residents, classes may now cost around $150, when they used to be half that price.

It's great that the facility has a new face but how about the ability of the city's residents to partake of our own "recreation center"?

Have you looked at San Francisco's recreration center classes: free, or as little as $5, minimal associated costs, state-of-the-art centers and hundreds of classes for all ages.

We're not San Francisco but we could learn a bit from them.

— Caroline Stern
Artist and painter

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BART construction barriers near Hardy Dog Park snarl traffic



Obeying existing traffic signage at Hudson and Claremont, drivers travelling north on Claremont merge haphazardly into the remaining through traffic lane. Letter writer Michael Adel has asked the city to temporarily reconfigure lane instructions.

Photo: Don Kinkead

Editor:

When BART construction barriers at Hardy Dog Park took over a northbound lane of Claremont Avenue traffic, I was perturbed to see that the two lanes of traffic coming up Claremont must merge into the remaining through lane approaching the traffic light at Hudson Street. It is either merge or be forced onto Highway 24, due to a left turn only lane marking. This causes serious backups, especially in the late afternoon during heavy commute time.

I called Oakland's Transportation Services department to offer a two-part solution:

1) Since relatively few cars make a left turn onto Highway 24, the left lane should be marked as for left turns OR through traffic;

2) For this to work properly, lane markings should be added on the other side of Hudson Street as Claremont continues, to direct traffic into the right-hand lane.

These simple changes should allow much more traffic to cross Hudson more safely.

The department promised to check it out. To date, I have had no response, but hopefully they will take some action and we will see an improvement in traffic flow.

Readers interested in supporting my recommendations can call Supervising Transportation Engineer Joe Wang at 238-6107, or e-mail him at JSWANG@oaklandnet.com

— Michael Adel

P.S. I've had two previous successes dealing with Oakland Transportation Services: Several years ago they reconfigured the four-way stop light at College and Claremont and they installed a Yield sign on Clifton so cars turning right onto Claremont northbound must yield to traffic exiting Highway 24.

— M.A.

RDA–Masons Joint Pancake Breakfast to Help Support Claremont School Programs

Joining forces to support Claremont Middle School programs, the Oakland-Durant-Rockridge Masonic Lodge #188, Claremont Middle School PTA, and the Rockridge District Association (RDA) will host a **community pancake breakfast** at the Rockridge Masonic Hall, 5449 College Avenue, Saturday, April 24, 9 a.m. to noon.

Breakfast will include pancakes, eggs, sausage, bacon, fruit, coffee and tea. The goal is to raise $5,000 for the school. Tickets are $10.

Proceeds from the breakfast will support programs at Claremont, a part of the College Avenue community since 1913.

In addition to a wonderful breakfast, diners will have the opportunity to see the interior of the Hall. Constructed in 1926, the hall replaced a previous Masonic Hall which stood on the corner now occupied by Market Hall.

Today's Rockridge Masonic Hall is one of the most historically significant buildings on College Avenue. Among the prominent local men who founded Oakland Lodge #188 was Henry Durant, for whom Berkeley's Durant Street was named. Berkeley Masons later named their Lodge #288 in his honor. Still later, Oakland Lodge #188 and Berkeley Lodge #288 merged with

What's for Breakfast?, page 10

Discovering Garber Park in Claremont Canyon

by Lynn Hovland, Hills Conservation Network

"The woods are lovely, dark and deep."— Robert Frost: "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"



John Garber (1833-1908), for whom Garber Park is named, was an attorney and judge who lived in Berkeley. He once owned (with several others) most of the land that is now the Claremont District. Garber's daughter inherited his share of the land and donated 13 acres of it to the City of Berkeley for a public park. Garber Park became part of Oakland when the boundaries of Berkeley and Oakland were officially determined.

Garber Park is a beautiful, shady woodland with steep trails. It lies mostly between Claremont Avenue and Alvarado Road. There are unofficial entrances (no signs) on Evergreen Lane, Rispin Drive and Alvarado Road. The park contains some of the oldest trees of diverse species in Claremont Canyon. Trails through the park have been recently created, cleared and maintained by volunteers.

Bindu Frank, who took the above photo, grew up in the house closest to Garber Park.

If you go to Garber Park

The Evergreen Lane entrance is most accessible. There is no sign; the trail into the park begins at the end of the cul-de-sac, close to the stairs that lead up to 144 Evergreen Lane. Getting down the first few feet of the trail is most difficult. Wear hiking boots or sneakers that give you some traction. Help yourself to (and return) a walking stick that you will see to the left of the trail.

This article was originally printed in the February issue of the Hills Conservation Network newsletter. The Hills Conservation Network is a volunteer organization committed to saving healthy trees. The group's Web site is: http://www.hillsconservationnetwork.org

To get to Garber Park, take Claremont to Ashby, turn right on Ashby, passing by the Claremont Hotel to Alvarado. Left on Alvarado up to a left on Slater Lane. Take Slater Lane to Evergreen Lane and turn right. Drive to the end of Evergreen, park and hike into the woods.

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The Italians: Rockridge's Tap Root

Is there still somebody out there who disputes the very strong Italian roots of our Rockridge community? Ask anyone who has lived in the neighborhood for more than 35 years about their ethnic ties and they will likely tell you, "Italian." Their great-grandparents possibly arrived here as immigrants, loved what they found, including a Mediterranean climate and lots of work, and they stayed.

While the Italians did not establish Rockridge per se, they have been part of the fabric of this community for almost 100 years. Our architecture, customs and traditions, even the kinds of vegetables we grow in our back yards and the wines we drink, bear witness to an enduring strong, mature, Italian cultural presence that all of us can savor. You can go to Genova Delicatessen, for example, and get almost anything you need to prepare an authentic Italian meal. And if you did not grow the remaining ingredients yourself in your own backyard – and pickled, canned or fermented them like they did in the old country – you can certainly find what you need at Market Hall.

Italian Heritage Clubs

Then there is the time-honored institution of the Italian heritage social club. Ask an Italian-American if he belongs to one, and chances are that the answer is an enthusiastic "yes." Locally, we have three major clubs: the Colombo Club at 5321 Claremont Avenue and the Fratellanza and Ligure Clubs at 1140 66th Street at San Pablo Avenue in Emeryville. My guess is that our Italian community will continue to thrive as long as there are these wonderful places where people can meet and share a common cultural heritage, language, food and drink. Rockridge should be so lucky as to have a community center like this for all its residents.

The Germans Versus the Italians

Lately, I have had the pleasure of experiencing the Italian social clubs first hand. It all happened when I joined the German singing societies. The gauntlet was thrown down. Gerry, my *mezzo-italiano* husband, decided he needed to fight fire with fire, so he joined the Italians; the Ligure Club, to be exact. He joined not just casually but with full heart and soul. As a result I now find myself running from one heritage camp to another, sometimes in the same evening. Our kids are now involved, their friends are involved, and their friends' friends are joining in. They adore all the fun, the goodnaturedness and uncomplicated camaraderie. Male camaraderie, that is: By and large women are relegated to the auxiliary organizations and participate by invitation at special gatherings only. How retro is that! But, perhaps there is a need for an oasis where male bonding can take place. So let's not be too hasty in condemning this practice.

Ligure Club

The Ligure Club was formed in 1934 in Temescal by first generation Italian immigrants from Genoa (Liguria). Its primary purpose was to provide these newcomers, who spoke a distinct Italian dialect, with a venue where they could gather socially and support their communities. Their club proudly maintained a facility at 4799 Shattuck Avenue (the building still exists) until 1980, when it was decided to sell this venue and share a space with the Fratellanza Club. Times have changed but the clubs endure. All the heritage clubs have thriving memberships, ranging from 400 to 1,000. Visit a club any day of the week and you will find members gathered there to socialize with old friends, swap stories of love and war, make music, play a little Bocce and get ready to prepare yet another massive monthly birthday dinner for the guys.

No longer exclusively Italian, these clubs welcome all who cherish and respect Italian culture and heritage. Sponsorship is required, of course.

"La Dolce Vita"— A Fundraiser

Parties are fine, but culture and education are a priority in the Italian American community. The Ligure Club, for example, organizes fundraisers every year to provide scholarships to college-bound students. It doesn't hurt if they have an interest in pursuing Italian culture and community service, but it is not essential to win one of these scholarships. The organizers want it known that there is a special fundraising event on April 17 at the Fratellanza Club. It will be a wine tasting, a silent auction to music, and a special raffle for a one-week stay for six people at a spectacular private residence, "Casa del sol y luna," in Manzanilla, Mexico. It comes complete with a chauffeur and cook.

If you have an Italian neighbor, check to see if they have raffle tickets to sell. There will also be posters around the neighborhood and possibly a table in front of Vino on College Avenue soon offering information, raffle tickets and tickets to the event. Call Joe Scodella at 510/653-8279 or Madeline Petri at 510/655-4678 for more information. See you there!

Ortrun Niesar can be reached at oniesar@sbcglobal.net or 510/326-2161 cell

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City Renews Rockridge BID with Amended Agreement

by Annette Floystrup, RCPC boardmember

The City Council has approved renewal of the Rockridge Business Improvement District (BID) following amendments called for by the city in the original contract with the Rockridge District Association (RDA), the non-profit corporation which administers the BID's assessments.

Financial Reporting Requirements

According to Margaret Fujioka of Council President Jane Brunner's office, the agreement between the city and the Rockridge BID will now require that each fiscal year the BID submit a full disclosure financial statement, including an actual expenditures summary.

The financial statement is to be provided within 60 days of the end of the fiscal year, except that for the fiscal year 2009-10, it is due by June 15, 2010.

The BID is also to submit to the city a CPA review report and to post quarterly financial statements on the association's Web site commencing June 15, 2010.

RDA Annual Meeting

At the March annual meeting of the RDA, treasurer Hank Levy said the BID had a "horrible year." No financials were made available, but losses were attributed to Out & About and a final payment of $31,579 to New City America for the professional services of Marco LiMandri. LiMandri's services, paid for by business assessee funds, were used in the failed attempt to form a property owner based Community Benefit District (CBD). In total, the RDA spent in excess of $46,000 on the failed conversion effort. The total annual assessment projected for fiscal 2010/11 is $120,000, about the same as fiscal 2009/2010.

RDA Board Election

The RDA board election, held March 18, returned Thelma Harris (Thelma Harris Gallery), Jessica Pitt (resident), Beverly McArthur (First Federal Savings & Loan), Joyce Gardner (FIT) and Susan Bernosky (Allstate Insurance) to the board. Four additional members were added to the 10-member board, expanding it to 14. New members are Elizabeth Armstrong (Dreyer's), Joe Garrett (Garrett, Watts & Co., Community-at-large), Grant Outerbridge (Mgr. of Diesel, a Bookstore) and Matthew Krohn (Caldecott Properties). The new board will consist of four street-level retail business owners, three upstairs professional services business owners, one upstairs retail business owner, two community-at-large members (area residents), and three employees of street level businesses, one of which is a banking institution, not a retail operation.

Supporting Independent Business on College Avenue

by Annette Floystrup

Local Shops Shop Locally

Recently, Jeff Dodge of La Farine bakery posted an impressive list of the local vendors he buys from to run his business. The vast majority of his suppliers were local businesses, in contrast to national chains like Safeway, which source globally.

Buying baked goods from La Farine, for example, puts money immediately back into our local economy and our community. La Farine and the other independent businesses on College Avenue are second only to Oakland's Chinatown in revenue generation for the city of Oakland.

Local employment

According to the Small Business Administration, small businesses pay 44 percent of total U.S. private payroll, and have generated 64 percent of net new jobs over the past 15 years. They employ just over half of all private sector employees.

College Avenue merchants epitomize small business success and the reasons for it. Most Avenue stores have weathered the economic downturn, and have done so because they are tuned in to the needs of their customers and offer goods and services with a personal touch.

Got $50 to Spend? Save a Local Business

A blog spawned a Web site and became an international movement about preserving small businesses. Cinda Baxter, retail consultant and professional speaker, writes Always Upward: the Blog, and on March 11, 2009, she wrote a post that went viral in days. One year later, it is an international phenomenon. Her Web site – www.350project.net – is filled with resources for small business people and their supporters. Materials are free to registered users.

Baxter's message is simple: Pick three local independent businesses, spend $50 a month in them, save your local economy. She calls it the 3/50 Project, and it is brilliant because it is doable.

Baxter explains it by the numbers: 3, 50, 68.

3: Pick 3 independently owned businesses you would miss the most if they disappeared.

50: Spend $50 a month in those local businesses. If half the employed US population spent $50 each month in independently owned businesses, their purchases would generate more than $42.6 billion in revenue.

68: For every $100 spent in independently owned stores, $68 returns to the community through taxes, payrolls and other expenditures. If you spent it at a national chain, only $43 stays here. If you spend it online, nothing comes back to the community.

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Come to the Claremont Spring Fling

by Julie Parker, Claremont PTA member



Whimsical decorations add to the fun of a past Claremont School Spring Fling fundraiser.

Photo: Mike Mages

Celebrate the wonderful and diverse Claremont Community at our annual Spring Fling Fundraiser. Festivities begin at noon Saturday, May 1, and run until 4 p.m. This year we applaud the many cultures that make up our community at large in a county-fair style format. Entertainment will include an assortment of music, ethnic dance and acrobatics plus carnival games and activities for children of all ages. Our special guest, radio station KMEL, will be rocking the house too. Delicious food will be prepared by our own Knights of the Round Table (formally the Dad's Club). We'll have a climbing wall, dunk tank, cake walk, prizes and more.

Bring your friends and family to a fun-filled day at Claremont Middle School, 5750 College Avenue. Proceeds benefit the wide variety of enrichment programs sponsored by the Claremont PTA.

Support Digital Media at Claremont

by Mike Mages, parent of a Claremont Middle School student

Claremont is the home of the only Digital Media Lab and Digital Media Program of its kind in an Oakland School District middle school, built and created by the Claremont Middle School PTA.

Over 400 students have been taught professional digital media software, such as Autodesk Maya 3D, Final Cut Pro and Photoshop, over the last year and a half in an extraordinary Media Lab. With the help of Oakland Tech's Parent Teacher Student Association, we have expanded the vision of this program to include Tech. We now call it Project Seven to highlight the mission of teaching professional digital media tools to students starting in 6th grade through 12th. Please take a look at www.projectseven.org for more details.

Due to budget cuts in California education, all of these efforts are being supported solely by donations and grants. To support this amazing program, please go to the Claremont Web site at www.claremontms.org and click on the 'Donate' button. Then, select "Project Seven" from the 'Designation' choices.

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By The Numbers 94618

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Avg. Price per Sq. Ft.: $496

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Earth Day, Rockridge Saturday, April 17

Time to Celebrate with Service

FROG Park: An Oakland Earth Day Featured Location

by Howard Ferrier

Almost nine years ago, the Rockridge community came together to build the Rockridge Greenbelt, now known as FROG (Friends of the Rockridge Greenbelt) Park. The Friends now need your help to keep the park clean, maintained and safe.

Join us Saturday, April 17, any time from 9 a.m. to noon, at the Hardy play structure for our maintenance day at the park. We will be working on the Redondo and Hardy playgrounds as well as the connecting path between each park site.

Bring gloves, hand tools and energy. Children over 5 years old may help if supervised by a parent.

For more information please contact Howard Ferrier, volunteer coordinator, at hwferrier@sbcglobal.net.

RDA Earth Day 2010

by Chris Jackson

To celebrate this national day dedicated to focusing on local, state and national environmental issues, the Rockridge District Association (RDA) is sponsoring five different projects to improve the College Avenue environment. RDA members will head up the work at each site; anyone interested is invited to come lend a hand.

The projects are:

1. Cleaning, weeding, and planting the traffic island across from Claremont Middle School at College and Miles Avenues. Come work with RDA Board members Susan Bernosky from Allstate and Elizabeth Armstrong from Dreyer's, beginning at 9 a.m.

2. Freshening up the pedestrian walkway to Hemphill Court at College and Broadway between Wendy's and Sabuy Sabuy Thai restaurant at 5231 College.

Earth Day 2010, page 13

Sidewalk advertising signs are seen by some to be a problem, by others to be useful. Tell RCPC what you think. Story at right.



Sidewalk Signs – What do You Think?

Oakland's planning code prohibits sidewalk advertising signs (commonly called sandwichboard signs), but you'd never guess it from walking along College Avenue. City enforcement has been lax, at best. On the other hand, sidewalk signs can convey useful information – everything from restaurant menus to special sales. Jane Brunner's office is considering whether the current prohibition should be relaxed or revised. We'd like to hear your opinions: Please send us an e-mail at chair@rockridge.org, or write to RCPC at 5245 College Avenue, PMB 311, Oakland, 94618.

Please mark your e-mail or envelope "Sandwichboards".

What's for Breakfast?

from page 5

Rockridge Lodge #468. All three are now known as Lodge #188.

The building, an architectural treasure, will be open to the public. Come for breakfast, meet your neighbors, and visit a part of Oakland's heritage, all while supporting Claremont Middle School.

For additional information, contact Kenneth Tramiel at ktramiel@yahoo.com or Kathy Rieves at 510/809-7530.

There are three ways to purchase tickets for the Breakfast:

1) Purchase on-line at the Claremont Middle School Web site: www.claremontms.org. Click on the "Donate" button. On the following page, click on the "Click to Donate" button, select $10 as your donation amount and select "Pancake Breakfast" from the Program Designation list. You MUST fill out your first and last names for the ticket to be credited to you.

2) Write a check to "Claremont Middle School PTA," noting on the check that it is for the pancake breakfast and which seating – 9 a.m., 10 a.m. or 11 a.m. – you plan to attend. Send or drop it off at Claremont Middle School, 5750 College Avenue, Oakland, CA 94618. (Place check in an envelope labeled "Claremont Middle School Breakfast.") Your name will be placed on the guest list.

3) Contact Kenneth Tramiel at ktramiel@yahoo.com or Patrick Zak at patrickzak@ymail.com to purchase tickets directly.

When you attend the breakfast you will be asked to indicate how you purchased your ticket(s).

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Lower Rockridge Parents Group Holds 8th Annual Yard Sale

by Nicole Aruda

On Saturday, April 17 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Lower Rockridge Parents Group (LRPG) will hold its annual community Yard & Bake Sale, the proceeds of which will benefit Peralta Elementary, Lower Rockridge's excellent public elementary school. The sale will take place at the Peralta School playground on Alcatraz Avenue between Telegraph Avenue and Dana Street.

LRPG was founded in 2001 by three neighborhood moms who had two specific goals in mind: to build community support for Peralta, the neighborhood public school, and to increase the general level of community within the Lower Rockridge neighborhood.

To meet these goals, LRPG established playgroups for children based on the year they would enter Kindergarten, monthly neighborhood brunches, and a listserv as a way to connect people in and around the neighborhood. In 2002, LRPG held its first Yard Sale benefit for Peralta.

LRPG has made huge strides in meeting its goals. The LRPG listserv now has over 350 members and has become an important way neighbors and friends communicate on a myriad of issues ranging from education, politics, entertainment and general family-related information.



Peralta Yard and Bake Sale offers a wide selection of donated goods to choose from.

Photo from: Nicole Aruda

Since the inception of the yard sale, it has raised over $26,000 to help support Peralta's many programs, including the new Kindergarten play area and many of the new gardens and art installed throughout Peralta's campus.

The LRPG Yard Sale is a great opportunity to get together with friends and neighbors to do some spring cleaning, shop for some great stuff, meet new friends, catch up with old friends, and/or have a coffee and brownie in one of Peralta's many gardens – all while supporting one of California's finest public schools.

There is always an abundance of great stuff to shop for, including tons of baby clothes and equipment, adult clothes, furniture, household goods, tools, art and books. The sale is the perfect way to celebrate Earth Day; recycle your old, unwanted stuff and find and reuse other people's stuff.

Items not sold will be donated to other charities. Past charities receiving donated items include: Clausen House, Elizabeth House, Bananas and The Salvation Army.

If you have questions about the sale, please contact lowerrockridgeparents@yahoo.com or call Nicole Aruda, 510/547-7976.

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Backyard Birder

from page 2

We make the effort to buy fresh seed mixes that attract the widest variety of birds. These are available at some pet stores and at stores dedicated to wild birds. Fresh and organic isn't just preferred by humans. During the winter and well into the breeding season, we also hang suet cages. Fatty seed cakes, often studded with peanuts and sunflower seed chips, provide important fuel to many birds like the **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** during the cold and lean months.

From My Desk Window

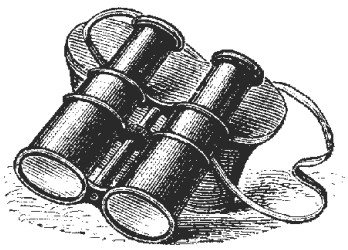
As I write this, the bark crevices on the large Monterey Pine outside my window have been visited by two stunningly beautiful male **Nuttall's Woodpeckers**. Along with their larger cousins, the **Acorn Woodpeckers**, they are what we hear making that rat-a-tat rat-a-tat sound as they hunt for insects in the local trees. The **Rosy Breasted Nuthatches** are also busy cleaning the bark crevices of insects, while **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** turn pinwheels hanging from camellia branches picking the leaf stems and new buds clean of insects.

And I just spotted our annual returnee, the **Black Phoebe**, America's only small black and white flycatcher, hanging about in our abutelon bush. A nesting pair have returned each spring, drawn by our neighbor's large pond.

Field Guides

I keep several field guides by my desk for quick reference. I bought my first field guide shortly after I moved into this house in 1981 and got my first garden. A quick trip to Pendragon netted me a classic: Roger Tory Peterson's "A Field Guide to Western Birds," for the princely sum of $3.

Our local bookstores have many different field guides to North American birds, both new and used, and I urge you to pick one up as a quick reference to the question, "What bird is that?" Who knows; you may evolve into the next Backyard Birder.



Cycling for Schools

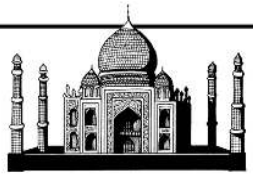
from page 1

and I am really glad that they decided to do it again, with renewed effort and dedication. I'm also a zealot for public schools, so this ride combines two of my big zealot issues.

Public schools shouldn't be just warehouses for kids where we pound enough answers into their heads to pass the state tests. We want to raise awareness that public education spending is way too low: California is 45th in the nation on spending per pupil. I hope we can demonstrate that we're serious about public schools in Oakland, that we expect elected officials and other citizens to share our dedication. We want to make our public schools places that we can all be proud of.

We raise money by sponsoring each cyclist. Pledge money for me or any of the other riders at http://rideforareason.dojiggy.com/pvetter. Thank you for your support.

— Paul Vetter, bikerdad



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Photo: Nancy McKay

Union Protests at Safeway on College Avenue

by Nancy McKay

Carpenters Union Local 152 demonstrated in front of the College Avenue Safeway store for about four days during the week of March 15-19. Union Field Representative Tim Lipscomb said the union expanded this demonstration to various Safeway locations around the Bay Area.

Union carpenters distributing handbills in front of a San Jose Safeway using non-union carpenters hung a banner on public property to publicize their grievance. Wielding a knife, the manager of the San Jose Safeway store reportedly cut down the banner and confiscated it. Union members felt threatened, and the union filed an unfair labor practice complaint. The National Labor Relations Board is currently investigating the incident.

Nancy McKay is co-chair of Concerned Neighbors of Safeway on College and co-vice president of Friends and Neighbors of Safeway on College (FANS). FANS' Web site is www.fansco.org

Earth Day 2010

from page 9

Starting at 9 a.m., we will repaint the fence, pull weed and trim back the shrubs. Come work with Chris Jackson.

3. Jennifer Kaplan of Rockridge Home is once again taking the lead to spruce things up at the Rockridge Library. This project starts at noon and runs to 4 p.m.

4. At Hudson and College across from the Library and Hudson Bay Café near Glass and Brass, we will be weeding, putting down weed cloth, and adding new plants and bark. This starts at 10 a.m.

5. At Eddie's Liquors, corner of College and Forest, we will also be weeding, planting and generally "spiffing" up the planter boxes. This project begins at 10 a.m. Come work with Chris Jackson here, too.

On Earth Day 2010, meet your neighbors and help your neighborhood. The RDA will have Earth Day T-shirts and snacks for participants. Bring yourself, your gloves, a big smile and be ready to pitch in. Please go directly to the project of your choice.

This is the second year RDA has sponsored Earth Day projects to help keep our business district and neighborhood a vibrant and attractive place. To RSVP, or if you have questions, e-mail the RDA at RDA@rockridge.com or call 510/604-3125. To adopt a spot for an Earth Day project of your own, visit Oakland's Earth Day Web site at http://www.oakandpw.com/Page289.aspx

More: RDA Earth Day 2010



Jennifer Kaplan, left; Jesse Thompson (former RCPC Chair Chad Thompson's son); Eric Warren; Jeffrey Orenstein, and Brian Schirber. Photo: Ronnie Spitzer

Jennifer Kaplan, proprietor of Rockridge Home, along with members of her staff, friends and community volunteers, issues an open invitation to one and all to join her – starting at noon April 17 – in cleaning and trimming the plantings surrounding the Rockridge Branch Library.

Jennifer is pictured above with clean-up crew members who worked with her on a similar clean-up in January.

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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

Council President Brunner's Community Advisory Meeting

Saturday May 1, 10am to noon. Peralta Elementary School: 460 63rd St. (parking on Alcatraz, east of Telegraph). Mtg. topic and other info: 238-7001, or view Brunner Report at www.oaklandnet.com (the site for all City-related information).

Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)

Joint Town Hall mtg. with RCPC (**see p. 1**). Express your concerns about crime and public safety. **OPD Chief Anthony Batts** will speak and ans. questions. 4/8, 7pm. Rockridge Library, upstairs meeting room, 5366 College Ave. Info: chair@rockridgencpc.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 Wed., 10:30am.

Baby and Toddler Story Time: 1st and 3rd Wed., 10:30am**, upstairs**.

Special Events:

National Library Week Book Swap and Book-Mark Making: All ages welcome. Bring any book to trade (1 for 1) with others. Bring a mat or blanket to display your books. Tues., 4/13, 7pm.

Around the World in Story and Song: Celebrate El Dia de los Ninos/El Dia do los Libros (Children's Day/ Book Day) with **Mara** of Story/Song Productions. Tues., 4/20, 7pm.

FOR TEENS

Rockridge Ninjas Anime Club: Teens 13 and up, watch and talk about anime (Japanese animation). Second Tues. each month, 5 to 6:30pm, upstairs meeting rm..

FOR ADULTS (Library sponsored events)

Writers' Support/Critique Group: All writers welcome. Bring 15 copies of up to 5 double-spaced pages of any prose for on-site reading/discussion (or come empty-handed). Third Saturday each month, 1 to 5pm. Sponsored by the California Writers Club, Berkeley branch (www.berkeleywritersclub.org.) Info: 420-8775 or Writefox@aol.com.

Lawyers in the Library: Free legal advice. First Tues. each month from 6 to 8pm (call to confirm). Advance sign-up starts 5pm. More info: 597-5017.

Other Adult Events:

• Author/photographer **Candacy Taylor** discusses her book, *Counter Culture: The American Coffee Shop Waitress.* Sponsored by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), Oakland-Piedmont Branch. Info: Sue; 530-2328.

ART EXHIBITS

Gallery:
Apr.: **Abba Yahuda:** paintings.
May: Merritt College portrait class.
Lobby Display Case:
Apr., **Nila Oaks:** photographs.
May: **Nancy Elliot:** watercolors.

LIBRARY HOURS
Tues, 12:30 to 8pm.
Wed., Thurs. and Sat. 10am to 5:30pm.
Fri., 12 to 5:30pm.
Closed Sundays and Mondays**, & closed: Tues., 4/6.**

Diesel Readings and Events

All events are FREE and open to the public.

Thurs., 4/8, 7pm. **Judith Tannenbaum:** *By Heart: Poetry, Prison, and Two Lives,* a two-person memoir she wrote with **Spoon Jackson.**

Mon., 4/12, 7pm. **Amnesty International Meeting** (2nd Monday each month)**:** All invited to exchange ideas on action.

Wed., 4/14, 7pm. UC Berkeley law professor **Kirk Boyd:** Launch Party for his new book, *2048: Humanity's Agreement to Live Together.*

Sun., 4/18, 3pm. Launch Party for poetry collection by **Margaret Ronda:** *Personification*. Also. local poet **Brian Teare:** *Sight Map.*

Tues., 4/20, 7pm. Local author **Daniel Alarcon:** *The Secret Miracle: The Novelist's Handbook,* a new anthology about writing.

Sun., 4/25, 3pm. **Lisa Shannon,** founder of Run for Congo Women: *A Thousand Sisters: My Journey Into the Worst Place on Earth to Be a Woman.*

Thurs., 5/6, 7pm. Local author **Lucy Jane Bledsoe:** *The Big Bang Symphony: A Novel of Antarctica.*

Tues., 5/11, 7pm. **Deborah Burnes:** *Look Great, Live Green: Choosing Beauty Solutions That Are Planet-Safe and Budget-Smart.*

Thurs., 5/13, 7pm. **Greil Marcus:** *When That Rough God Goes Riding: Listening to Van Morrison..*

DIESEL, A Bookstore, 5433 College Ave. Info about other events and book discussion groups: 653-9965 or events@dieselbookstore.com.

Studio One Art Center

365 45th Street

Register NOW for the Summer Poetry Workshop on June 14-18. Participating poets: **Graham Foust, Truong Tran** and others. Daily afternoon panels on various topics such as Small Press Publishing with **Rusty Morrison** and **Matthew Zapruder.** Info: 597-5027 or studiooneartcenter@gmail.com.

Wisteria Ways House Concert Series

PremaSoul: Ancient Indian melody with the soul of American music. Hear sound clips at www.premasoul.com. Sunday, 4/25, 3pm (door opens 2:30pm). $15-20 donation for musicians (cash only at the door).383 61st Street. (Not wheelchair accessible) For reservations (highly recommended), RSVP to info@WisteriaWays.org or 655-2771.

Calif. College of the Arts (CCA)

5212 Broadway (near College Ave,) **Events are free and open to the public.**

23rd Annual Barclay Simpson Award Exhibition: Award-winning artworks by CCA's MFA graduates. **Apr. 19–24**. Reception: Mon., 4/19, 5:30 to 7:30pm. Hrs: Tues, Thurs, Fri, 10am-noon and 1–6pm; 10am–noon and 1–7:30pm; Sat, 10am -4pm. Oliver Art Center. Info: 415/551-9214.

Readings in Celebration of Humble Pie Volume 2: Apr. 20, 7:30pm in Nahl Hall. Humble Pie is the new literary journal of the Writing and Literature Program. Come for the readings, refreshments and pie! Presented as part of CCA's Hearsay Reading Series. Info: 597-3708 or humblepie@cca.edu

SPRING FAIR: Apr. 24, 11am -3pm. Shop for one-of-a-kind, affordable gifts made by CCA students, alumni, faculty and staff. Paintings, photography, jewelry, ceramics, blown glass, clothing, textiles and more. Live Jazz and refreshments. Info: 415/703-9571.

Lower Rockridge Parents Group Annual Yard & Bake Sale

Saturday, Apr 17, 9am–1pm. Proceeds benefit Peralta Elementary School's many programs. Meet neighbors and shop for clothes, books, household goods, tools and more. Peralta School playground on Alcatraz Ave. (between Telegraph. And Dana). More info: Nicole Aruda, 547-7976 or lowerrockridgeparents@yahoo.com. **See story p.11**

Hillcrest School Carnival

Saturday, Apr 17, 11am–3pm. Old fashioned fun with games, a giant slide, live music, BBQ, Jamba Juice and more to benefit Hillcrest PTA programs. Hillcrest School playground, 30 Marguerite Drive (near B'way Terrace and Hwy 13). More info: visit hillcrestpta.org/walkathon.shtml.

Claremont Middle School Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser

Saturday, Apr 24, 9am–noon. Menu also includes eggs, bacon/sausage, fruit and drinks. Help raise $5,000 for school programs. Includes a tour of the historic Rockridge Masonic Hall. Rockridge Masonic Hall, 5449 College Ave. Tickets are $10. **For info on how to purchase tickets, see story p.5.** More info: Kathy Rieves, 809-7530 or Kenneth Tramiel, ktramiel@yahoo.com.

Claremont Middle School Annual Spring Fling

Saturday, May1, noon–4pm. The annual PTA fundraiser is a celebration of our diversity with a county fair format featuring carnival games, ethnic dances, arts and crafts, great food, music and more. On the school playground at 5750 College Avenue (at Miles). Info: 879-2010. **See story p.9**

Peralta In Bloom

Saturday, May 8, noon–4pm. Peralta Elementary School Spring Community Festival: Carnival games, 30-foot climbing wall, potted plants; great food, live music and more. Proceeds benefit art, music and sport programs, counseling, and other services. 460 63rd Street. Info: Paul Kagiwada, paulkag@yahoo.com.

Memory Camp

Instructor **Terri Barr:** Apr 22 through June 24; 10:15am–12:15pm. Remember more, feel energized and improve concentration. $30 materials fee. No. Oakland Senior Center, 5714 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. More info: 597-5085.

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Volunteer for Earth Day on Saturday, April 17. See details, page 9.

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