THE Rockridge News

www.rockridge.org

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Sponsored by the Rockridge Community Planning Council • 4123 Broadway, PMB 311 • Oakland, CA 94611 • 869-4200

Interview: Mayor Jean Quan



PHOTO: D. KINKEAD

by Don Kinkead, editor, The Rockridge News

SHORTLY AFTER HER INAUGURATION, Mayor Jean Quan met with RCPC Chair Stuart Flashman and Rockridge News editor Don Kinkead in her office to discuss her plans and concerns for Oakland and its future. Working from a list of questions prepared by RCPC's board and submitted in advance, the new mayor spoke broadly about Oakland schools, public safety, the need to improve retail, the city budget, public facilities, redevelopment and zoning, and AC Transit's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) proposal.

Mayor Jean Quan's City Hall office is a roomy space overlooking 12th and Broadway from the third floor of the building first occupied in

▸ Interview, page 5

IN APRIL: RCPC BOARD ELECTIONS; SIX SEATS. SERVE ROCKRIDGE ☛ PAGE 4

Nine Kitchens for Ninth Tour Event

2011 Rockridge Kitchen Tour: the Search Is On!



by Natalie Mehta, chair, Rockridge Kitchen Tour

As the holidays have wound down and the New Year is gathering speed, planning for this year's Rockridge Kitchen Tour is now in full swing. For those of you who may be new to the neighborhood, this fall will mark the ninth biennial kitchen tour since 1995 and will feature nine beautifully renovated, restored, or remodeled Rockridge residential kitchens.

This event is the primary fundraiser for the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC), the non-profit community organization that sponsors publication of The Rockridge News, holds informational monthly town hall meetings, and supports community concerns. Funds raised are dedicated to community projects that advocate for health, safety, and quality of life in Rockridge.



As shown in the photographs at right and above from past tours, the kitchens come in a variety of styles, sizes, and budgets: Traditional, modern, Craftsman, modest updates to large-scale renovations, green features and interesting

▸ Kitchen Tour, page 4

AGENDA: February RCPC Town Hall Meeting

17

1. City Attorney John Russo Discusses Gang Injunctions and the City Budget.
2. A Look at Urban Wildlife and the Birds and the Bees, with City of Oakland Naturalist Stephanie Benavidez.
3. Mike Lynes, Audubon Society: Birds in Rockridge.

1. City Attorney John Russo discusses Oakland's gang injunction strategy, and how it differs from injunctions in other California cities, and will also talk about a "back-to-basics" budget approach to the city's massive pension debt.

2. Stephanie Benavidez, city of Oakland Naturalist and Resident Naturalist at the Rotary Nature Center, will speak about city wildlife and answer your questions.

3. Mike Lynes, Conservation Director of the Golden Gate Audubon Society, will discuss and identify

▸ Feb. Town Hall Meeting, page 7

Thursday, February 17 | 7:30-9 p.m.
Rockridge Branch Library, 5366 College Avenue at Manila, Community Room (Upstairs)

Rockridge News Volunteer Esther McFeely Celebrates 100th Birthday

Esther McFeely celebrated her 100th birthday in January. That is not an age most people expect to reach, or maybe even plan to reach. Explaining how she made it so far, Esther said, "Just meet it head on." More than 60 friends, neighbors and admirers attended the open house held in her honor.

Esther's family moved to Rockridge in 1920, when she was nine years old. Prior to that, the family lived in San Francisco, where Esther was born, then in Nevada City, hometown of Esther's mother. The family settled at last on Lawton Avenue in Rockridge and Esther has lived in the house since that time. "I have seen many a home change ownership," she says.

An early supporter of The Rockridge News, Esther opened her home for several years beginning in the late 1980s to the monthly gathering of volunteers who met to count out and bundle newsletters for district and block captains to distribute.

She always pitched in to help expand her dining room table with extra leaves, then joined the hubbub and gossip as the sorting and counting went on.



Esther McFeely at 100, pictured during the open house celebration in her honor.

Photo: Michael (Buddy) Collins

A widow, she raised her family of two children, taught ballet in the large, open upstairs of the home, fostered young chimpanzees until they were old enough to move to the zoo, and was Mother Goose at Children's Fairyland.

"I would like to do it all again," she said. And meant it.

— Don Kinkead

Editor's Notes:
Rockridge News Reader Survey

The Rockridge News reader survey continues through February, with results to be reported in the March newsletter. The response has been strong – and interesting – from all around Rockridge. Have you had a chance to send in your response? There is still time to get on record. Go to www.rockridge.org to find the Survey Monkey form to fill out online or the manual form you can download, complete with ink or pen, and return by mail.

25th Anniversary Year Notes from Prior Editors

The note from the next prior editor of the newsletter was lost in a computer mishap, and will be published in March.

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Friday: 12 – 5:30 p.m.
***CLOSED**: Sundays and Mondays; also Feb. 12 & Feb. 22*
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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- Are there community issues you'd like to see covered in ***The Rockridge News***?
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- Would you like to write a letter to the Editor?

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RCPC Voice-mail: 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.

Newsletter Advertising/Deadlines
Publication date of the next issue is
☛ **March 5, 2011**
☛ **March deadline is February 20, 2011.**
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 fourth Wednesday of the month at the Rockridge Branch Library, Upstairs Meeting Room, 7:30 p.m. Next meeting: February 23.
Subject to change. Check Rockridge.org for meeting updates.

■ Land Use Meeting Agendas

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

No Land Use Committee report this month. No news or change to report on the College Avenue Safeway proposal.

Report: RCPC January Town Hall Meeting, in Two Parts

by RCPC Chair Stuart Flashman

Rockridge Shopping Center Plans are Topic in Town Hall, then City Committee

Safeway's proposal to redevelop the Rockridge Shopping Center was a hot topic during January. Safeway wants to totally rebuild the shopping center, a 15-acre mini-mall at the corner of Broadway and Pleasant Valley Avenue that also includes the large and popular CVS store.

RCPC Town Hall Meeting Considers Possibilities

Starting things off was RCPC's January Town Hall Meeting, where RCPC board Chair Stuart Flashman and John Gatewood from Urbanists for a Livable Rockridge Temescal Area (ULTRA) presented a critique of Safeway's plans and four alternative proposals – two from ULTRA and two from RCPC members. Flashman stressed that local community groups are critical of Safeway's proposal, and that the proposed alternatives are a starting point in looking for a better plan. The other groups involved are Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League (PANIL), Standing Together for Accountable Neighborhood Development (STAND) and Friends and Neighbors of College Avenue (FANS).

ULTRA's two plans stress the benefits of including residential development. One proposes establishing an entirely new neighborhood in the site's northeast quadrant (the current CVS store site), where Safeway wants to put its new store. The plan suggests putting Safeway, instead, on the Broadway street frontage. The second ULTRA plan has less residential and more commercial development and includes phasing to accommodate Safeway's desire to keep its store in continuous operation.

The other two plans, one by local architect and former Oakland Planning Commissioner Glen Jarvis and the other a group effort led by Flashman, would redesign Safeway's "shopping street" into a more integral part of the site's traffic flow. Both also place a restaurant and café along the shoreline of the quarry pond at the site's eastern edge. Jarvis' proposal leaves Chase Bank at its current location, while Flashman's proposal, like Safeway's, would move the bank to a new building. Jarvis' plan accepts Safeway's plans for surface parking for its new store, while Flashman's proposes moving the Safeway closer to Pleasant Valley Avenue and putting an entertainment-restaurant-structured parking complex (similar to Bay Street in Emeryville) at the site's northeastern corner. All four proposals, as well as Safeway's plans, are posted on the RCPC website (http://www.rockridge.org).

Based on audience comments, most of the 40 Town Hall attendees seemed to prefer the alternatives to Safeway's proposal. There was still major irritation and disappointment at losing the CVS store, and skepticism that Safeway could replace the store's many valued functions.

The next day, representatives of RCPC, ULTRA, FANS and PANIL met with Safeway executive David Zylstra and Oakland planner Daren Ranelletti to discuss Safeway's plans and alternatives. It was clear from the discussion that Safeway intends to stick to its current plans, although Zylstra said he was open to the suggestion of putting a restaurant and café next to the quarry pond. Zylstra also raised the spectre that if Safeway's plans weren't approved, it would move its store to the existing CVS building, leaving the rest of the site unchanged. (Since this would make the store considerably less accessible, it would probably only be a temporary stopgap measure.)

Design Review Committee Hears Community Interests

On January 26, the Planning Commission's Design Review Committee held a public hearing on Safeway's plans. The five community groups again presented their critique and alternative proposals, which were backed by many of the local community members who spoke. The Greater Oakland Chamber of Commerce,

▸ Town Hall Report, page 4

Part 2 of the Town Hall Meeting

Annual Reports from RCPC's Committees

January's Rockridge Town Hall Meeting had a two-part agenda. Part one was a presentation of four alternative proposals for revamping the Rockridge Shopping Center. (See article, top of page.) Part two was presentation of reports from RCPC's committees and sponsored projects, and comments from the public on what RCPC's priorities should be for the coming year.

While this is a traditional beginning of the year topic, it was handled a little differently this year. The reports were put together in written form and were available both at the meeting and on RCPC's rockridge.org website. (Extra copies are still available in the Rockridge library lobby.) In addition, each committee chair gave a very short summary of the committee's activities. The committee reports were generally well-received, although some specific questions were raised. All of the committees emphasized their interest in having more Rockridge residents participate. It's also still not to late to provide your input on RCPC priorities for 2011.

To find out how to work on an RCPC committee, or to tell us what you'd like to see RCPC focus on this year, e-mail chair@rockridge.org, leave a phone message at 869-4200, or write RCPC, 4123 Broadway, PMB 311, Oakland, 94611.

Kitchen Tour 2011 Planning Begins

Planning for the 2011 Rockridge Kitchen Tour event is now under way, with Rockridge resident Natalie Mehta as committee chair. While there were some concerns that the recession may have dampened renovation activity over the past few years, early indications are that many residents have used this opportunity to engage great architects, designers and contractors who have a shorter waiting list than during the market peak.

This year's event promises to bring tour participants a plethora of ideas from neighborhood kitchens in a variety of styles, sizes, and budgets.

Mehta has been a neighborhood resident since 2002. While her own family of five continues to thrive without a dishwasher or garbage disposal (yes, it can be done), she is looking forward to seeing the wonderful kitchen renovations that have taken place over the past few years, and selecting the nine kitchens to be showcased in this fall's tour.

— Natalie Mehta

Kitchen Tour

from page 1

designs, we want to see it all!

If you have or can recommend a kitchen to be included on the tour, the RCPC invites you to submit it now for the fall 2011 tour.

For more information, please contact Natalie Mehta at natalie.mehta@yahoo.com or call 415/279-5148.

Town Hall Report

from page 3

by contrast, gave its full backing to Safeway. There were also a number of other speakers who supported Safeway's plans, many of whom wore professionally prepared stickers supporting Safeway and had apparently been recruited by Safeway-hired solicitors.

At the end of a long hearing, the committee voted two-to-one (committee Chair and architect Madeleine Zayas-Mart voting "no") to support Safeway's plans and send them on to the full Commission.

The city is still preparing an environmental impacts report for the project, which staff indicated would probably be released in February or March for public review and comment. The project will likely go to the Planning Commission for a decision some time this coming summer.

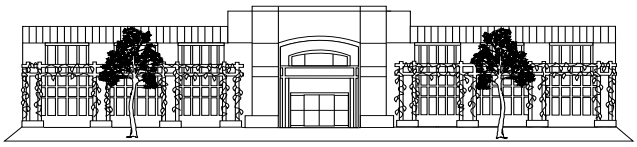
In the meantime, RCPC will continue to work with the other community groups to improve the final project so that it will be something the community can be proud of for years to come.

RCPC Board Invites Election Candidates

The Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) holds its annual election for seats on the board of directors in April. Six board seats (out of a total of 13 voting seats) will be up for election. One of them could be yours.

To apply for board candidacy: Send a short statement of your interest, including contact information, to: RCPC Board Elections, 4123 Broadway, PMB 311, Oakland, 94611. Statements of interest must be received by February 14. A candidate forum will be held at the March Town Hall meeting.

For more information or to discuss your interest, e-mail chair@rockridge.org.



Growing Support Helps to Swell FORL Funds

by Kathy O'Neal, co-chair, FORL

The Friends of the Rockridge Library's (FORL) annual donor campaign continues to demonstrate community support for our Rockridge Library with a total of 110 donors, comprised of 85 continuing and 25 new supporters for 2011.

With this financial support, FORL will provide funds to our branch to purchase books and periodicals, support teen programs and a summer intern for the Children's Reading Program as well as other important projects in 2011.

To learn more about FORL, visit friendsoftherockridgelibrary.org.



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Interview

from page 1

1914. Soaring overhead is a 15-foot ceiling bordered by carved representations of gods and goddesses.

Several large potted plants are lined up in the sunlight on a table by the windows, and a painted scroll and other paintings adorn the walls. Flanked by two easy chairs, a coffee table sits in front of a modest couch placed against a corner of the room.

On the coffee table is a box of Vice Chocolates, produced and sold in Oakland, that Quan buys to give as recognition gifts for staff and city personnel. She used to buy a well-known brand of chocolate in San Leandro, but now buys the Vice creations at the Temescal and Jack London Farmer's markets, to emphasize what will be a tenet of her administration: Oakland needs to bring home the sales tax money now hemorrhaging to nearby cities that offer a more rewarding shopping experience.

The 25 Percent Solution

"My focus is to strengthen retail," she says, and describes her "25 Percent" solution. "Bring back 25 percent of your shopping to Oakland," she asks of Oakland residents. She says studies show that just that small step could add $10-12 million annually to city coffers, equivalent to the entire Park and Recreation budget, or the cost of 60 additional police officers.

She adds that the 25 percent program is a stop-gap measure while she works to create new retail opportunities. The success of the Fox Theatre Downtown redevelopment that has fostered restaurant growth, housing and a vibrant street life in the area can be replicated farther north on Broadway in the Uptown area with a focus on retail opportunities for Oakland residents, she believes.

For Quan, many of Rockridge's amenities – ready access to shopping and public transportation, pedestrian-friendly retail, a variety of interesting shops – can be templates for Oakland's redevelopment planning. Still, smaller, more localized shopping gains are also important to her. She is pleased to report that with the opening of a grocery store in West Oakland and two in East Oakland, no area of Oakland now lacks grocery shopping.

However, to the extent Governor Jerry Brown's proposal to eliminate redevelopment funding is successful, Quan's quest for retail growth could suffer. "We are going to fight this redevelopment transfer," she says. "I need that money to amass the space along Broadway in the Uptown area. It will attract the stores that people want to come to and shop in."

Oakland's Budget

Beside retail, the mayor's other long-term economic goals include fostering growth in jobs and increasing recruitment of business to the city.

Quan believes that the city's budget can be strengthened with greater sharing of resources between the city and public agencies, such as schools and libraries, that could, for example, reduce costs by sharing existing space instead of constructing individual facilities. She recalled that while the Rockridge Library was being built, a corner of Claremont Middle School's playground became the site of a temporary library building, open to the public and easily accessible to students, immediately expanding that school's library resources. Other resource sharing could include multi-agency use of the same accounting software, she suggests.

Quan also plans to address financial and administrative concerns underpinning several city departments, including Oakland school and police departments.

After-Effects of School's State Receivership

When the state returned control of the school district to Oakland, the turnover included $17 million in structural deficits accrued during seven years of state management, the mayor said. She has asked her education policy appointment, Lewis Cohen, to address the effects of the state's administration. First, he will be working with Assemblyman André Swanson to craft legislation to get the state to take some responsibility for the increase in the district's debt during the receivership. "If we can get some of this debt eliminated, the district would have more money," she pointed out.

A related assignment for Cohen is to work with Assemblyman Swanson to develop state standards for future receiverships. "The first rule," she says, "should be: 'Do no harm.'" Quan said she anticipates that with looming state cuts in education funding, more school districts will be at risk for receivership, and deserve better treatment than was afforded Oakland.

Public Safety and Policing

Meeting the expense of additional police officers is a concern of the mayor. "I would like more police, but they are expensive." Looming over the normal costs of recruiting, training, equipping and deploying police officers is the issue of pension fund contributions. At this time, the city pays full pension contributions for police officers and says it can no longer afford to do so. The city wants a contribution rate of nine percent from officers, an amount paid by other city employees. The police union does not support that plan.

Quan sees resolution of the impasse as critical to future public support of other economic measures that could be developed to pay for more police. Quan's hope is for "a settlement by the spring." In the meantime, her public safety goals include keeping crime down and building trust between the city and the police, and getting police to interact more with the community. "It can't be just the Problem Solving Officers who have public contact," she said. Still, recently-passed Measure BB that restores Problem Solving Officers "will help keep crime down. I am adamant about doing that."

Part 2 of the interview will be published in the March issue of The Rockridge News.

Mayor Jean Quan: *I am adamant about keeping crime down.*





Rockridge Cornucopia

Barry A. Kaufman

Creating a Community Cookbook

This holiday season, I received a copy of "Images of America: Rockridge" (Arcadia Publishing) by Robin and Tom Wolf.* Using archival photographs, "Images of Rockridge" celebrates the history and stories that shape the unique character of our community. As I read the book, I began thinking about an idea I've had for several years: Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a Rockridge community cookbook that shares the culinary fabric of our neighborhood?

Throughout the 12 years I've been writing Rockridge Cornucopia, I've had street conversations with neighbors and received numerous phone calls and e-mails commenting on the recipes. Neighbors have shared memories of how their parents and grandparents prepared these dishes. Now, I invite you to share a family favorite recipe to be compiled with others in "Rockridge Cornucopia: A Community Cookbook." Our treasured culinary memories will add to the ever-evolving Rockridge community.

Think about a family recipe you would like to contribute to the cookbook; it should hold a special place in your family culinary history. Use the following as a format for your contribution:

1. Title: A pithy and inviting title, something like: Aunt Jenny's Thanksgiving Leftover Turkey Hash

2. Dining category: appetizer, soups, salads, vegetables, side dishes, seafood, poultry, meat, desserts and beverages

3. Number of servings

4. A recipe header: Headers are short introductions to a recipe. For our cookbook, give some historical and cultural/ethnic background and why the dish is important to your family. Or tell something about the special character of the ingredients that gives meaning to the recipe

5. The recipe: Recipes generally have two parts:

- *Ingredients with measurements and preparation instructions*: Be specific with measurements and preparation. Include where to get hard-to-find or specialty ingredients.
- *Cooking instructions*: Include preheated oven temperature, type of cookware used, and timing (or signal that the cooking is done). For example, you can say "sauté chopped onions for 5 minutes" or "sauté onions until soft." You might also want to include some special tips or substitutions. It also adds a nice touch to mention the type of plate or bowl suggested for presentation of the meal.

I will edit the recipes to conform to publication style. Rockridge News editor Don Kinkead will design the publication. The cookbooks will be sold at local businesses at a price to cover production expenses. The cookbook may also be included as a bonus for those who join in the Rockridge Kitchen Tour to be held this fall.

I'm excited about this project and look forward to receiving your family's culinary treasures. Please e-mail your contributions to kaufman42@earthlink.net or mail Barry Kaufman, 5699 Oak Grove Avenue, 94618. I'm looking toward a spring/summer publication. Send me your recipes by mid-April. Let me know your thoughts on how to make this project a success.

* Robin Wolf is a sociologist and former Diablo Valley College professor. Tom Wolf is a U.S. and Oakland historian and is retired from teaching at Laney College. They have lived in Rockridge for 38 years.

Barry Kaufman is a graduate of the California Culinary Academy. Barry is available for cooking classes and tours of Bay Area ethnic markets. His e-mail is kaufman42@earthlink.net

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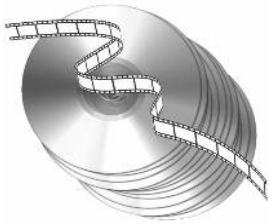


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Rockridge DVD Project FAQ



by Annette Floystrup, co-chair, the Rockridge DVD Project

The Rockridge DVD Project team has received questions about the workings and origins of the project from potential donors. While a number of articles about the project details appeared in the Rockridge News in 2010, here is an overview of the most frequently asked questions.

■ Does the Oakland Public Library (OPL) administration approve this project?

The project has the blessing of the OPL administration. Gerry Garzon, Associate Director of the Oakland Public Library, has said: "It is especially critical when people are looking for alternatives to purchasing of books, DVDs, music, cable and internet connections at home, that they can turn to the Library to provide free access to all of that and more. We appreciate and value this Rockridge DVD project and know that they will be received by a grateful community." OPL also lent the services and expertise of Randy McDevitt-Parks, Collection Management Librarian for the city, and barcode scanning equipment to help build the DVD database (now online at www.RockridgeDvdProject.org.

■ Are the Rockridge Branch librarians involved in the project?

Though not involved in the fundraising effort, Rockridge Branch Head Librarian Pat Lichter has allocated additional shelf space for the DVDs, and lent Rockridge librarians Gay Ducey, Susy Moorhead and Eve Buckner to the project. Together with Randy McDevitt-Parks from downtown, they sorted through the DVDs, selecting 2,877 discs for the branch. (See additional details in the May, 2010 Rockridge News archived online at www.rockridge.org.)

■ Has the library accepted DVD donations before?

Yes. In June 2008, Friends of the Rockridge Library (FORL) voted to use $200.00 to purchase 40 DVDs at $5.00 each from the Global Video store on Telegraph Avenue, which was closing. These were cataloged in-house and placed in the library with stickers reading "A Gift from FORL."

■ Where did the DVD Project DVDs come from, and what did they cost?

The DVDs were selected and purchased from the extensive specialty inventory of the now-closed Videots store on College Avenue in Berkeley's Elmwood district. Videots was known for offering unusual and hard-to-find DVDs including a large selection of documentaries, films of interest to cinephiles and PBS series such as "Mystery!" Each DVD cost $4.00 and has been maintained in like-new condition by state-of-the-art polishing equipment.

■ Why does it cost $11.00 per DVD to put one in the library?

The purchase cost of the DVDs was $4.00 each. In addition, it costs $7.00 per DVD to pay for cataloging and the standardized security cases the library has specified. OPL is converting their DVD collections citywide to these cases. The cost also covers the labor to move the DVDs from their original cases to the security cases and proper recycling/disposal of the original cases.

■ Who does the cataloging and how long will it take?

The DVDs will be cased and cataloged by a city of Oakland-approved vendor used by the Library for this purpose. Once funded, this process should take only a few weeks.

■ Why can't volunteers do the cataloging?

Most libraries, Oakland Public among them, are members of the Online Computer Library Center, Inc. (OCLC). Among many things, OCLC maintains WorldCat, the combined catalogs of the member libraries. Think of it as the world's ultimate (virtual) card catalog. (See http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/) The practice, called copy cataloging, is: picking up an item, looking to see if someone has already created a record for it in WorldCat, and, if so, pressing a button to make a local copy of that record. The outsourcing firm specializes in this and has their own private catalog of ready-to-go bibliographic records.

■ Are DVDs an outdated technology?

DVDs will be relevant as archival material for many years to come. As digital media, they can be played on several generations of DVD equipment already as well as most computers. The estimated 17,000 (and counting) movie and TV titles available as streaming video are eclipsed by the more than 100,000 titles available on DVD. In the Videots collection, a large percentage of the movie and TV titles are not available as streaming content. Many likely will remain so since demand plays a role in the licensing agreements necessary for streaming content. Licensing agreements are also frequently time-limited, unlike a hard copy DVD.

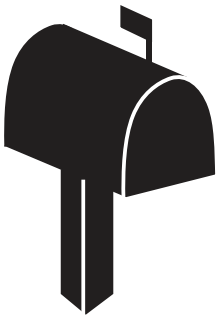
Many of the vintage films our librarians selected to flesh out the Rockridge Branch's archive of important films by period or director, most of the documentaries and almost all the British TV series are unavailable as streaming content. In addition, the library collections are intended to serve all the community, including those who cannot afford the devices and fees associated with streaming content. DVDs at the library are free for library card holders.

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February Town Hall Meeting

from page 1

birds most likely to be seen in the Rockridge neighborhood, especially as the weather warms up, and bird-related issues in urban environments.



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.

George & Walt's Responds to Neighborhood Letters

Editor:

This letter is in response to letters published in the January issue of The Rockridge News and the e-mail the RCPC sent to George and Walt's.

First, I want to clarify the Pool hall permit. This permit was required by the city to continue the present operations of the already existing two pool tables in the bar. Therefore, the permit would not exacerbate or change anything. However, the permit process was instead used to give notice to George and Walt's that there is a noise issue for some residents of the surrounding area.

Rockridge is a great area that was/is ahead of its time. Long before the "new green" concept of work/business/live neighborhoods, there has been this community. George and Walt's are a part of this Rockridge history. The bar has been in the same family and in the current location for over 65 years; the original location, called Trueb Café (est. 1931), was in Rockridge before the Grove/Shafter freeway was built. George and Walt's take pride in being a part of Rockridge and are greatly involved with the community. They have supported food drives, Toys for Tots, schools, policemen and continue to be involved with local fundraisers, raising tons of money.

The letters published under the heading "Problematic Bar" are incorrect and misleading by stating that George and Walt's has done nothing in response to the noise abatement act, nor the "myriad requests for relief." The statement that "George and Walt's management deny any responsibility" for their patrons to the point of letting them drink outside is completely ludicrous. Also, the number of pool tables is two, not three, as stated. The complaint that George and Walt's ignored many attempts to address the issues of noise and to create a procedure to receive complaints is misleading. The only acknowledged attempt has been to call the bartender after 1 a.m., which was unsuccessful. In meetings with neighbors in 2006, the Owners and Managers gave their personal phone numbers to call about any issues presumed to be caused by the business of George and Walt's. No one has phoned them or come in to speak with anyone in management (manager Barbara Stelzriede is on premise five days a week). Instead, the choice was made to take it directly to the city as opposed to trying to resolve the issue in a direct resident to business relationship.

One of the published letters refers to a letter from Oakland's nuisance abatement administrator to George and Walt's and another bar nearby to tell of neighbors' concerns. In response to the letter, Barbara S. spoke directly with a representative of the city about whether there were more complaints after that warning, which there were not.

Action was taken immediately to address the complaint by extending the hours of the doormen, and mandating the front door and windows be closed at 10 p.m. There already had been a sign posted stating "please respect the neighbors and leave quietly." These changes were relayed immediately to Ms. Marcus [Special Activity Permits, city administrator's office – *Ed.*] along with follow-up on a regular basis up until the meeting of the pool hall permit (January 6, 2011). NO other complaints had been filed against George & Walt's.

Concerning direct communication, George and Walt's have every intention of working with the community and in response to the noise and loitering. We will be taking the following steps:

- Any complaints or concerns brought to Management will be addressed in a timely manner. Please call 510/653-7441.
- If groups are congregating out front at closing time, the doormen will strongly discourage them. With warning, the police may be called.
- A staff member will be attending NCPC (Neighborhood Crime Prevention

Letters, top of page 9

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Letters, from page 8

Committee) meetings on at least a quarterly basis.

■ There will be a set volume level on the jukebox for after 10 p.m., along with the door staying shut (other than for in/out) after 10 p.m.

■ To establish a direct communication with the residents/businesses of the community.

— Barbara Stelzriede
George & Walt's
Staff and Management

A Comforting Moment of Civic Support and Service

Editor:

On a recent Sunday afternoon, someone came knocking loudly at the door, interrupting my watching of the playoff game. I made him shout through the door because I don't open my door to strangers, even on a bright afternoon. He said the truck parked in front of my house was leaking gasoline and if it was my truck, maybe I would want to do something about it.

I went out and looked and indeed, this was not a slow drip but a steady spurt from the gas cap. Weird. Gas collecting on the curb. Not good. Not my truck, but the man and I figured this perhaps could be dangerous.

I called 911, was on hold for maybe one minute, then courteously transferred to the fire department, who said, "We'll send someone."

They came within five minutes – a large firetruck and several firefighters. The gas was still spurting. They said it was good that I called, and asked if I knew whose truck it was, because they really needed to get inside. I said no, but given the playoff game and my proximity to George and Walt's, I suggested that they ask there. In the meantime, to stop the spurting, they put something around the cap. The fireman returned from GandW's with an embarassed owner ("Oh, gosh. Sorry") who got in and drove it away.

I am telling you this because it all worked the way we hope it will: a person alerted me to a problem, I called 911 and the service was great; the firefighters came, all worked out fine.

— Kales Avenue Resident

FROG Park Closures Persist; Why?

Editor:

We're going on our sixth month of closures to our neighborhood's only playgrounds. What is this awful city doing about it? Is there an official timeline? How can we push on local politicians?

— Bethany

See FROG report, next column. – Ed.



FROG Park: Open At Last!

by Theresa Nelson, chair, FROG Committee

On the last Friday of January, the two play structures in Frog Park re-opened, after an unexpectedly long closure due to the major repairs needed. Our thanks to everyone who called or wrote the city to show how important Frog Park is to our community.

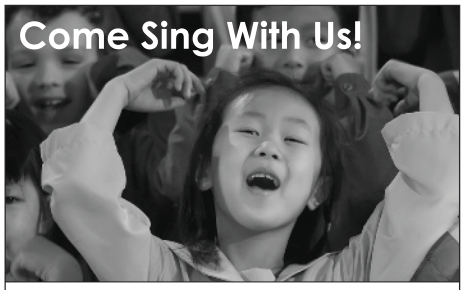
The FROG Committee (Friends of the Rockridge-Temescal Greenbelt) worked extremely hard since last September to get the repairs done quickly and correctly. Staff from Public Works handled the renovation work, and FROG worked closely with the play structures' original designer, Leathers & Associates, to make sure the renovations were consistent with the original design.

Once the fibar was removed from the play areas, the extent of the damage was apparent, and work began to obtain the specifications for the special playground materials. FROG donated $15,000 towards purchasing the specially treated wood, the synthetic wood, the tot slide, and the fibar. Some of these are unusual materials specific to this kind of play structure; the specially-treated wood alone took eight weeks to receive here in Oakland.

Spearheading the effort for FROG was treasurer Ronnie Spitzer, who worked countless hours to keep the work moving, ordering materials, and communicating

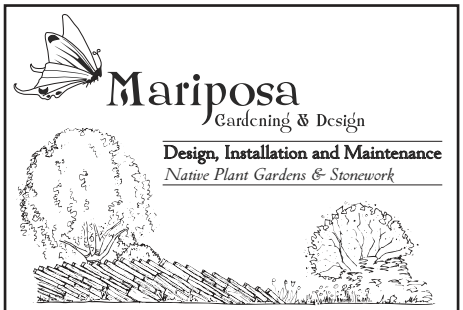
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The Italians of Oakland

Great neighborhoods don't just happen overnight, as some new homes advertisements might want us to believe. Like a good bottle of wine, they take time to mature. In fact, 50 or 100 years are nothing when it comes to the making of a distinct neighborhood culture. Many factors come into play along the way, many of which are beyond our control, perhaps just happy accidents.

For Rockridge and several other Oakland neighborhoods, the happy accident was the Italians. There is no doubt they had a major positive impact on how this area developed and even how we live today. Their history is the subject of a new Arcadia book coming out this month, written by **Rick Malaspina** and titled "Italian Oakland." Rick's grandparents came to California in the late 1800s, so it has been a labor of love for him to chronicle the history of the Italian-American communities that sprang up in Oakland. Many descendants of the original families still live here and opened their family albums to contribute wonderful photos to the publication. We thank them for helping us understand our community history. Go buy the book.

Then

In the first half of the 20th century, probably more Italian than English was spoken in the Temescal District. The Italians who settled here about 100 years ago came predominantly from the northern regions of Italy (Piedmont, Liguria and Lombardy), driven by poor economic conditions back home and a strong desire to succeed and prosper in the new world. Lively, energetic and hardworking, they soon realized, like many immigrant groups, that America offered opportunity but that nothing came for free. There is a familiar saying among the Italians: "I came to America because I heard the streets were paved with gold. When I got here, I discovered three things: The streets weren't paved with gold, they weren't paved at all, and I was expected to pave them." But their willingness to pitch in made a huge difference in the way our community developed over the years.

In fact, many of the young single Italian men who landed in Rockridge found

THE ROCKRIDGE MUSE

by Ortrun Niesar

their first jobs at the Bilger Quarry, now the Rockridge Plaza shopping center at 51st and Broadway. Others rode wagons through the streets of Oakland collecting garbage, forming the beginnings of the Oakland Scavenger Company. Women found work at the Rossi Cigar Factory (now remodeled as lofts on Center Street in West Oakland) or they did piece work at home while raising the children and preparing the meals they remembered from back home. Vegetables and fruit trees were tended in large backyards, prosciutto hams were cured in cool cellars where "custom crushed" grapes aged in nondescript bottles as well. In short order, produce businesses, groceries, restaurants, barbershops and dry goods stores sprang up to provide service far beyond this tight-knit, industrious community. Churches and schools followed, along with lovely new homes. The Italian-American community had arrived in Oakland, and its hub was Temescal and Rockridge.

Now

Italian is no longer the language of choice here, but get to know an Italian-American neighbor(and there are many still here, living in their original homes) and you will hear the dialects peculiar to Northern Italy, taste the authentic foods and experience the colorful traditions around family weddings, communions and funerals. One strong holdover of days gone by are the Italian-American social clubs (Colombo, Fratellanza and Ligure), but I think more than that, it's the traditions , the culture, their values and attitude toward life that resonate so much with us.

Rosetta Costantino and her family did not settle with her parents on Boyd and Hudson until 1974, when she was 14. Her family were recent immigrants from Calabria, not the North of Italy, but her love for the Italian way of life, where "food "is written in capital letters, was clearly well nurtured right here.

Today, Rosetta lives a couple of miles further up the hill, but otherwise nothing much has changed. She and her family continue to grow their own vegetables and prepare their meals the way their grandparents did in the old country. When we visited her recently, the discussion was all about splitting small green olives – one at a time, mind you – and curing them the Calabrian way. You might try it if you have olive trees in your garden, but be forewarned, it's extremely time-consuming.

Rosetta, a Silicon Valley chemical engineer, has given up technology for cooking, a skill that surely contains a larger potential for furthering human happiness. She has just published a marvelous cookbook titled "My Calabria: Rustic Family Cooking from Italy's Undiscovered South." Look for it at Market Hall and in our book stores. Her cooking classes, taught in Emeryville, are immensely popular. She is currently organizing a culinary tour of the Calabrian countryside in May. Contact her at rosetta@cookingwithrosetta.com or www.cookingwithrosetta.com

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FROG Park Open

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with city staff and Leathers & Associates. Carol Behr brought in a pro bono arborist who advised on the invasive redwood roots at Redondo. Jimmy Pedersen (part of the original Big Build), used his construction knowledge and contacts to advise on replacement surfacing to minimize future drainage problems. Howard Ferrier, FROG's maintenance manager, began the work last September at the Fall Maintenance Day and continued to provide renovation advice. Many community members turned out in October and November to clear roots and clean the gravel sub-surface: thank you.

We appreciate the efforts of Jim Ryugo and Wes Ramsey from Public Works, who spent many hours with FROG on site, on e-mail, and on the phone assessing the damage and determining how to proceed; Brian Carthan directed much of the repair work, and gardener Luciano Cortes helped throughout the process. Thanks, too, to Councilmember Jane Brunner and staff chief Zac Wald for their efforts to speed the work and help re-open the park.

And now, enjoy the re-opened play structures and all of Frog Park. And join us in keeping this community asset open and in top shape. Come out on Earth Day, April 16, with your family and friends, to plant, clean the creek and clear vegetation. We need you, and the children of this community need you and all of us as stewards of the Park. Visit our website, www.frogpark.org and see "Contact Us," or send an e-mail to info@frogpark.org. More details to follow in the March issue of The Rockridge News.



Join the Newsletter Team

The Rockridge News Needs Your Help

The Rockridge News is looking for a new block captain and district captain to deliver the monthly newsletter. Block captains typically deliver to one block of residents while district captains deliver bundles to block captains. Both jobs take only 20-30 minutes once a month and come with the reward of satisfaction that you are doing your part to keep our community informed and united. Please call or email to sign up for one of the following:

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12C Block Captain	From Ada down Broadway, odd numbers to the real estate office on Broadway at the Broadway/College intersection.
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Call the Rockridge News business manager at 510/547-3855 or e-mail smontauk@gmail.com to volunteer. (Be sure to note your route choice.)



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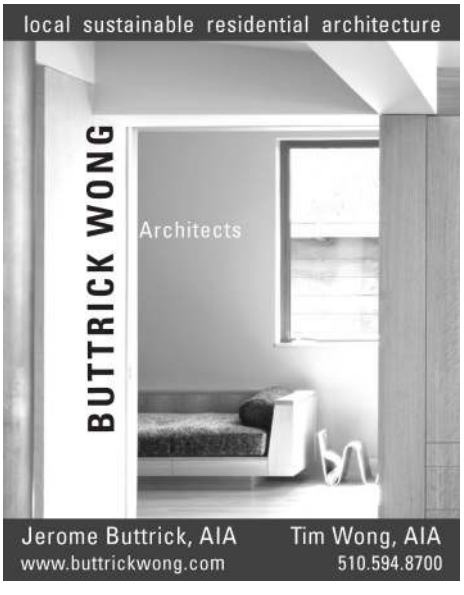
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miam.miam Means Delicious in Any Language



The Neighborhood Merchant

by Theresa Nelson

miam.miam

Where can you find delicious, healthy treats and fun, playfully designed products in the same place? At miam.miam (French for "yum yum"), the frozen yogurt (and more) shop that showcases the unique and lighthearted work of designers and culinary experts from the Bay Area and around the globe.

Opened in August 2010, miam.miam is the brainchild of an interesting group of designers and cuisine experts, originally as a concept to inspire their work, which then became a reality. Eight years ago, the group asked themselves, if we actually opened a store, what kind of food would support the product design, and what kind of products would appeal to customers? Thinking about many culinary options, about three years ago they settled on frozen yogurt, because it is healthy, colorful, fun, and appeals to both children and adults. The frozen yogurt idea was the catalyst to finally plan and open the store.

The store itself is unlike any other, built by a team of industrial and graphics designers with craftspeople, architects, furniture designers, culinary experts (including chefs from Tartine and Slanted Door), all working together. There are virtually no straight lines in the store; everything is curved, organic, flowing, with blue, green and white colors creating a cheerful and festive atmosphere. Colorful plexiglass tables swivel into position for customers of all sizes, and the custom graphic wallpaper, light fixtures and seating support the design concepts of the group. The side wall features curving shelves showcasing their designs: colorful mugs shaped to fit perfectly in your hand, storage containers made of double-walled glass or white porcelain, stainless steel tableware and kitchen accessories, their iconic white mushroom bowls, and white porcelain plates that look like the shape of water rising in slow motion from a droplet hitting a surface.

Marrying useful, beautiful design with delicious, fresh food means constant research and testing of new recipes and flavors, many of which are unique to miam.miam. Every day they feature 10 flavors of locally sourced frozen yogurt, ranging from classic tart vanilla and chocolate to blood orange and pomegranate blueberry (pumpkin ended a while ago, more seasonal flavors to come). The frozen yogurt is sold by the cup size, not weight. The delicious, flavor-rich gelato is made by Alberto Malvestio, according to the recipe from his great-uncle, a gelato-maker in Italy for decades. Toppings for the frozen yogurt go way beyond the usual sprinkles and sauces, and include Valhrona chocolate seeds and other chocolate chips, an array of seasonal fresh fruits, nuts, granola, green tea mochi, cocoa nibs, various cookies and candies, with sauces including warm caramel, warm honey, and warm chocolate. With so many coffee-related design products, they feature a selection from local roaster Blue Bottle Coffee.

Co-owner Baran Dilaver, a native of Turkey and a UC Berkeley alum, worked with mostly European culinary companies and chefs, with a special focus on Italian products including olive oils, truffles, and more. Shaped by his own background as the son of an artist and an architect, he saw the opportunity to present the lighthearted culinary product designs with top-quality, playful foods. His partner, Jimmy Zaharya, had a frozen yogurt store on Telegraph Avenue, and knew the Berkeley/Oakland area well. They both felt that College Avenue and the sophisticated customers in the area made Rockridge the perfect place to test their concept. The design team for the products include Bay Area natives and designers from around the world.

So what's new at miam.miam? On the menu front – sweet crêpes! Four different flavor combinations are now available, and savory crêpes will be coming soon,

miam.miam, page 13

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miam.miam

from page 12

as well as other breakfast options. Using their specially designed whipped cream dispensers, they offer flavored whipped creams including jasmine, classic vanilla, almond, chocolate, even mascarpone. On the design front: the Duet™, the world's first combined French press and tea pot/infuser. The ingenious design includes an interchangeable coffee mesh filter and a tea basket that can float up from brewed tea, allowing the steeping of the tea to be carefully controlled and the tea to be steeped again without any mess. It saves space, and would make a great graduation gift for students heading off to college.

So far, says Baran, they've enjoyed the feedback from customers, responded with new flavors and food choices, adding more local ingredients, and continue to focus on learning more about what people like.

They welcome suggestions for flavors, topping, and products. So stop by, try a flavor or two or three, a few toppings, maybe a cup of coffee or even a crêpe, browse the shelves of ergonomic mugs and eye-catching tableware, and enjoy the colorful environment of miam.miam!



miam.miam co-owner Baran Dilaver prepares a sample of one of the many inventive gelato combinations the new College Avenue business offers.



a miam.miam custom lamp.

PHOTOS: DON KINKEAD

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January 16, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, East Bay Depot for Creative Reuse. $22. All materials provided. Limited enrollment. Send check and contact information to: Classes, The Depot, 4695 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 94609. 510/547-6470.

Hello Gorgeous!

Celeste for Hair. 5336 College Avenue. 510/658-3658.

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Home Repairs & Improvements

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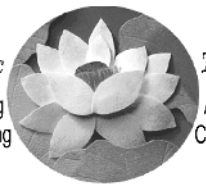
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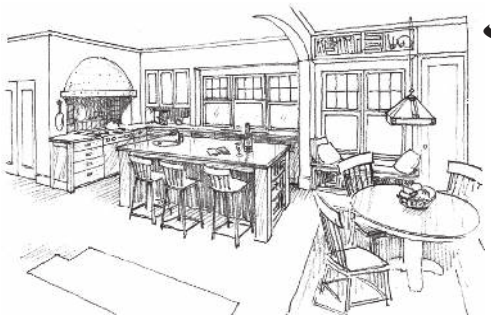
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E-mail *Rockridge News* Community Calendar items to: joellis1@hotmail.com, phone 653-3210 (after noon), or mail to: *Rockridge News* Community Calendar, 4123 Broadway, PMB 311, Oakland, CA 94611. Deadline is the next to the last Tuesday of the month.

Compiled by Jo Ellis

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Neighborhood Crime Prevention CouncilL (NCPC)

Residents and business members of NCPC's 12Y and 13X areas can voice their concerns about crime and public safety. 2nd Thursday each month (2/10), 7pm. Rockridge Library, upstairs meeting room, 5366 College Ave. (at Manila). 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

- **Adkinkra Cloth Learning & Doing:** Learn about traditional West African cloth patterns; decorate a few pieces of cloth and make a small book cover or placemat with your cloth. Thurs., 2/17, 3:30 to 5pm. All ages welcome: best for kids 5 to 12.
- **Fridays With MoChA:** create art with MoChA (Museum of Children's Art) artists. Fri., 2/25, 3:30 to 5pm. All ages welcome.

FOR TEENS

- **Rockridge Ninjas Anime Club: Ages 13 and up**, watch and talk about anime (Japanese animation). Second Tues. each month (2/8 and 3/8), 5 to 6:30pm, upstairs meeting rm.
- **Teen Advisory Board (ages 14-18):** Help advise the library how to better serve teens. Get community service credit for school. **Snacks provided**. 1st Saturday each month, 4 to 5pm.

More info: Susy, 597-5017.

FOR ADULTS

- **Writers Support/Critique Group:** All writers welcome. Bring 15 copies of up to 5 pgs. (double-spaced, MS margins) of any prose for on-site reading/discussion (you're also welcome to 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 and referrals.** First Tues. each month. **New times: 5 to 7pm (advance sign-up starts 4:45pm)**. Note: Volunteer lawyer leaves before 7pm if no more people are present.

Art Exhibits *(call to confirm)*

Gallery:

- Feb: **Oakland Art Assn. Rick Nelson**: small paintings.
- Mar: Oakland Public Library Staff Art Show.

Lobby Display Case:

- Feb: **Re-Create: Art by Kids;** sponsored by MoCha and the Rockridge Library.
- Mar: Oakland Public Library Staff Art Show.

LIBRARY HOURS

Tues, 12:30 to 8pm.
Wed., Thurs. and Sat. 10am to 5:30pm.
Fri., 12 to 5:30pm.

Closed: Sundays and Mondays; **also all Oakland Public Libraries closed Sat, 2/12 and Tues., 2/22**.

Diesel Book/Poetry Readings/Events

All events are FREE and open to the public.

Sun., 2/13, 3pm. **Alan Senauke:** *The Bodhisattva's Embrace.*

- Mon., 2/14, 7:30pm. **Amnesty International Meeting** (2nd Monday each month): All invited to exchange ideas on action.
- Thurs., 2/17, 7pm. **Mark Hertsgaard:** *Hot: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth.*
- Sun., 2/20, 3pm. **Poetry Flash: Peter O'Leary:** *Depth Theology* and **Brian Teare:** *Pleasure*.
- Thurs., 2/24, 7pm. **Michael McClure:** *Of Indigo and Saffron*.
- Thurs., 3/3, 7pm. **Elena Mauli Shapiro:** *13 rue Therese*.
- Sun., 3/6, 3pm. **Lisa Catherine Harper:** *A Double Life: Discovering Motherhood*.

DIESEL, A Bookstore, 5433 College Ave. More info about these authors/ books (and other events and discussion groups): 653-9965 or events@dieselbookstore.com.

College Preparatory School: Book Fair and Car Wash

17th Annual Parent's Association Fundraiser: Book sales on Sat., 3/5, 10am to 4pm and Sun., 3/6, 10am to 1pm. Book prices: $2 and $3. **Donations of books (new or used), CDs and DVDs, in all categories for all ages, are needed and are accepted thru Mar 3**. Put donations in collection bins (near stairs in the parking lot) and pick up a tax deduction form. Unsold books donated to local charities. On Sat, 3/5, there is a **car wash and yard sale** in the parking lot from 8am to 3pm. Proceeds benefit teacher's classroom enrichment programs. College Prep School, 6100 B'way. **Free parking in lot during the Fair**. Info: Silvia at silviahughes@comcast.net.

Wisteria Ways House Concert Series

Jamie Laval, Celtic violinist and **Richard Mandel**, guitarist in local Irish bands. Traditional music of Scotland, Ireland, Brittany and Quebec. Sample sound clips at www.jamielaval.com/listen.html. Saturday, 2/19, 8pm (door opens 7:30pm). $15-20 donation for musicians (cash only at the door).383 61st Street (inside venue, not wheelchair accessible). For reservations (highly recommended), RSVP to info@WisteriaWays.org or 655-2771.

Women Singers Wanted

The Distaff Singers, the Bay Area's longest-running women's choral group, is seeking new members. No auditions necessary, just ability to match pitch. Practice Tuesdays, 7:15 to 9pm at Bishop O'Dowd HS, 9500 Stearns Ave. A benefit concert in the fall supports local K-12 music programs. Info: Carola Ingram, 547-1191 or carolaingram@mac.com.

The Princess Project

Provides free prom dresses and accessories to high school girls who could not otherwise afford them. Clean out your closets of new and "nearly new" fashionable dresses, formal gowns and party dresses: all lengths, sizes, fabrics and colors. Collection drive is between Feb 7th and 21st. In Rockridge, dresses and accessories (no shoes) will be collected (clean and on hangers) at Crush on College, 5550 College Ave. (Hrs. Mon-Sat 11am-7pm; Sun 11am-5pm). Complete guidelines for donations at http://princessproject.org/donate/dresses-accessories/. More Info: Tara: 981-1420 or tara@princessproject.org.

North Oakland Senior Center

Programs include: Arts/crafts; health Insurance counseling; dancing and exercise; trips, tours and theater outings; Alzheimer's Caregivers Support Groups and more.

- **Free AARP Tax Help.**

Mon. – Fri., 8:30am to 4pm. 5714 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. Subscribe to "The North Oakland Senior Times" for full schedule of classes/events, lunch menus, membership, and volunteer opportunities. Info: 597-5085.

American Red Cross

- **Mobile Blood Drives:** In Feb., all presenting donors can enter **4 weekly drawings for "Movies for a Year". Each winner will receive 12 pairs of movie tickets** (not available at high school or college blood drives). Call 1-800-Red Cross (1-800/733-2767) or visit www.redcrossblood.org to find a location near you.
- **Volunteer Orientations:** Tour the Oakland Blood Center. Learn to assist blood donors, deliver blood, help with special projects. Tues., 2/8 from 6pm – 8pm and Wed., 2/23 from 6pm – 8pm. 6230 Claremont Avenue (across from College Ave. Safeway). Learn more or sign up: Anne at 594-5165 or BlackstoneA@usa.redcross.org.

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