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Sponsored by the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) • 4900 Shattuck Ave., PO Box 22504, Oakland 94609

Is Your Neighborhood Prepared for Whatever Comes Next?

by Skip Fogarty

With another destructive and smoky season of wildfire recently upon us, Bay Area residents live with the constant awareness of lurking disaster. No one knows when the next "Big One" will strike, but we all know it's out there.

With many confined at home by the pandemic, now might be a good time to start to organize (or re-organize) your neighborhood's readiness to respond to an earthquake or wildfire.

You've heard the mantra "make a plan" — but where to start? Let's look at one neighborhood's history with disaster preparedness to gain some insights.

Still reeling from the Loma Prieta quake in 1989 and the 1991 East Bay Hills Firestorm, longtime Rockridge resident Louise Comfort says she and a cohort of neighbors on Golden Gate Avenue realized they needed to get better organized.



Golden Gate Avenue resident Michael Black surveys the neighborhood's shared emergency supply locker.

"Back-to-back disasters was more than a wake-up call," remembers Comfort, who lost her home in the fire. "We needed to take action."

Emergency Preparedness, see page 4

Nov 19 — RCPC Virtual Town Hall

Have an Idea to Beautify Your Neighborhood?

— By Robin McDonell, RCPC Vice Chair

Have an idea for a neighborhood-improvement project but not sure where to begin or how best to fund it? The Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) is hosting a virtual Town Hall on **November 19, at 7:30pm**, to propose a new round of the Kevin Faughnan Community Grants Program. Join your neighbors at the virtual gathering where RCPC Board members will present the program: What it is; how it works; who is eligible; and how to apply. The RCPC Board voted to set aside $5,000 of the proceeds from the Rockridge Kitchen

RCPC Grants, see page 11

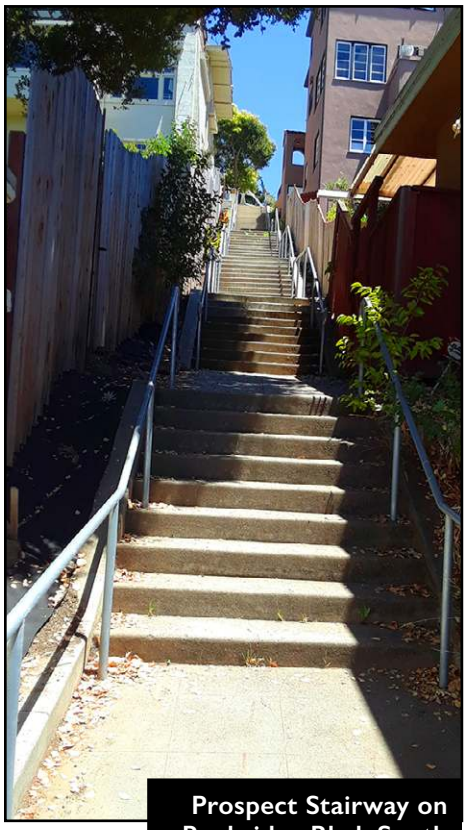
Staircases of Rockridge

by Bill Kaufner

Did you know that east of Upper Broadway there are public paths and staircases, signed with romantic names (Verona Path); visually descriptive names (Ridgeway Path, Buena Vista); names that mystify (Gando Path, Ratondo Path); and walkways that provide fabulous views of the bridges, bay and hills? All told, there are 16 or more of these dotted along Upper Rockridge.

Most are in good condition, although a few may require the adventurer to mind winter debris and loose handrails. The good news is these pathways provide the intrepid roamer with a myriad of architectural styles and landscape designs to ponder — not to mention the exceptional health benefits of vertical-climbing aerobic activity.

Staircases, see page 14



Prospect Stairway on Rockridge Blvd. South

RCPC Welcomes New Board Members

The Rockridge Community Planning Council welcomes two new board members: **Annette Floystrup** and **Kirk Peterson**, who join the ten current board members. (**M.C.**) **Mary Catherine Haug** retired from the board last month to devote herself to "exercise; domestic projects; her two cats, Dexter and Jack; and the California Revels." The board and the community thank her for her time and contributions.

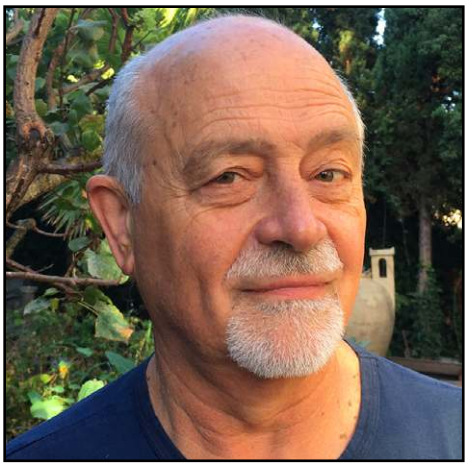


ANNETTE FLOYSTRUP

A dual citizen of Denmark and the United States, Floystrup immigrated with her family to Oakland at the age of five. She grew up on 63rd Street, at Hillegass, when Rockridge was a working-class neighborhood, and attended Peralta, Claremont, Oakland Tech, and UC Berkeley. Her family was politically active during the '60s, and she experienced being tear-gassed more times than she can count. After 10 years in Berkeley and a year abroad in Denmark, Floystrup moved back to Rockridge in 1981 where she now lives with her husband, Ben Hong, and their two cats.

As a self-taught PC Consultant specializing in computer workplace ergonomics, she was asked to speak at Silicon Valley's Homebrew Computer Club by Lee Felsenstein, designer of the first portable computer, the Osborne 1.

Floystrup worked on creating a permanent home for the Rockridge Branch Library — from concept to completion — even contributing her talents to the architectural design committee. As co-chair of the Rockridge DVD Project, she helped to raise $17,000 to increase the library's collection. Floystrup also writes content for every RCPC Kitchen Tour brochure. ■



KIRK PETERSON

Kirk Peterson was born in 1951 on Pill Hill in Oakland, at which time he also inherited Italian citizenship — and has been hereabouts since. He studied at UC Berkeley and the Rhode Island School of Design, and has been practicing architecture locally, on College Avenue, for a few decades.

Peterson engages in civic activities including volunteer work for the Oakland Museum and serving on the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board. He has had project-related interactions with RCPC for many years and decided it was time to become more active.

"I love the Oakland cityscape and its neighborhoods, the eclectic architecture, and of course the interesting sorts of people we share the city with. My wife and I have lived in our 'loft space' in our storefront for eight years, and are currently transitioning into the new house and ADU in the backyard. We really look forward to sharing our home again once it's safe."

Peterson enjoys getting together with his extended family. His mother Aïda lives a block away from him at Merrill Gardens, and Kirk has a musician son in Baltimore, and a fashion-designer daughter in LA. ■

The Rockridge News

The Rockridge News was founded March 1986 by Don Kinkead, and is published monthly (except August). It 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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Articles and letters submitted for publication should be emailed to the editor. All submissions are limited to 600 words max, and must include the author's name, phone number, email address, and city or neighborhood of residence.

All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and brevity. To submit content, or for reprints of an article, contact: editor@rockridge.org.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CCA Dorm Sold for Affordable Housing

Upper Broadway Advocates (UBA) is delighted that the City will buy and repurpose California College of the Art's (CCA) dorm building for transitional and permanent housing, plus on-site support services, for unhoused Oaklanders. Our city needs much more of this. We hope all of Rockridge will join us in welcoming the families and seniors who will be our new neighbors on Broadway.

The sale is scheduled to close in December. The building will then be refurbished, and move-in is slated for in March 2021. At that time we'd like to help acquaint residents with neighborhood resources, activities and benefits, and continue to extend what hospitality we can as time goes on. We will be seeking ideas from their social services staff and the residents themselves. Others in the neighborhood may also be interested.

With the dorm gone from the project, the revised plans for the CCA site include only 10 percent for "moderate" (not low) income housing. UBA continues to advocate for truly affordable units, along with sensible density that the neighborhood can absorb, and green and attractive architecture that harmonizes with Rockridge. ■

L. Correll, UBA Steering Committee

RCPC Rockridge Community Planning Council — Land Use Committee

Due to space limitations, the November 28 meeting report is only available online at rockridge.org.

The December meeting of the Land Use Committee will be held on **Wednesday, December 23, at 7:30pm, online via Zoom**. An agenda will be posted at https://rockridge.org the week prior. Those interested in attending should rsvp via email to landuse@rockridge.org or call the chair at (510) 652-5373 for information on joining the meeting via computer or phone.

John Wagers' Legacy, Continued

Thanks to **Jo Ellis** and *The Rockridge News* for her informative and loving memorial for longtime neighborhood activist, **John Wagers**. Jo Ellis recorded many of John's interests and pursuits, but didn't include his longtime involvement with North Oakland Voters Alliance (NOVA), which is how we came to know him.

NOVA (initially the Ad Hoc Committee to Save the Old Merritt College Building) formed in the mid-1980s to save the nine-acre former University High School building and site on MLK Jr. Way. John was one of the original steering committee members, along with the late **Henry Johnson, Mattie Jones, Ceci Kilmartin**, and the two of us.

The controversial strip mall project was fought for years, as NOVA sued the City of Oakland in Federal court over "demolition by neglect" and successfully placed the site, often referred to as the "Birthplace of the Black Panther Party," on the National Register of Historic Places.

NOVA, for several years, held monthly public meetings at nearby churches and schools, and distributed newsletters free to households (similar to RCPC), in the areas surrounding the campus, now referred to as the Bushrod neighborhood. At its zenith, NOVA published 3,000 newsletters/month. We funded the newsletter and the lawsuit with money raised from donations, garage sales, and money returned by the City of Oakland to NOVA, after the City settled our lawsuit and secured the building, backing away from the demolition path going forward, pursuing an adaptive re-use strategy instead.

John plunged in, attending every meeting, promoting the cause wherever he went (and he was a great meeting go-er), and personally supervising the delivery of hundreds of newsletters in his neighborhood around Ayala.

Success has a thousand mothers, failure none. A recent profile of lawyer **Fred Hertz** in *The Rockridge News* mentioned his support for the rescue and rehabilitation of Old Merritt, now Children's Hospital Research Institute (CHORI), the North Oakland Senior Center, and Dover St. Park. Hertz, along with other Oaklanders, supported our efforts, yet it was John Wagers and NOVA who led the effort. Victory wasn't assured until the election of Sheila Jordan in 1991, who ran on a platform that included saving the campus. ■

Robert Brokl & Alfred Crofts

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***Emergency Preparedness,** from front page*

Shortly thereafter, several homeowners "on the curve" — as neighbors refer to their stretch of Golden Gate — undertook rigorous Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training. CERT was originally developed by the Los Angeles Fire Department and is now sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The purpose of CERT is to train people to care for their families and neighbors during and after a disaster. The likelihood is, in the midst of a disaster, the fire department and other responders won't be able to answer most calls for hours, or maybe days.

"That training was an ambitious way to start," Comfort says. "But it's critical to think about potential risks ahead of time, so we would be ready to respond with collective action."

Comfort, who is a disaster management expert, author and university professor, says there are several simple steps to get started making your neighborhood safer. First, identify a leader, or better yet, form a small team to organize meetings (Zoom calls work fine), and create a neighborhood roster of all residents. Rosters should note children by name and age, pets with names and descriptions, neighbors' applicable emergency skills, medical needs, mobility issues, and out-of-area contacts.

"Preparedness is an ongoing process. You need to have regular meetings to keep everyone focused. You have to practice essential skills like first aid and CPR to be ready to help," Comfort says.

Keeping in touch and having regular get-togethers is key. "When our block captain moved away a few years ago, we lost some momentum," Comfort reports. But now a new group of Golden Gate neighbors, about 25 households, is in motion.

They've refreshed their roster to include many new residents. They've held preliminary meetings about roles and responsibilities. They've inventoried their shared emergency supply locker including first-aid supplies, a 300-foot fire-hose, rescue tools, and communication gear. They're planning wildfire evacuation strategies and budgeting for needed supplies and equipment.

The Golden Gate response team's longtime leader was Marv Tripp. A retired OUSD educator, Tripp moved to Davis several years ago.

"I'm delighted to hear the block is re-organizing around this purpose," Tripp says. "Putting the team together was a blessing to me. After the fire, we were training and practicing regularly. But we were also creating stronger bonds as a community."

Oakland has several programs supporting neighborhood readiness. Communities of Oakland Respond to Emergencies (CORE), was originated following Loma Prieta by the city's fire department. But this intensive training program (comparable to CERT) lapsed a couple of years ago because of staffing and budget challenges. (Good news: CORE is now restaffed and aiming to restart online trainings as soon as January 2021.)

Maybe the easiest starting point is with Oakland Community Preparedness & Response (OCP&R), part of the Oakland Firesafe Council. OCP&R Program Manager Doug Mosher says: "We think of ourselves as 'CORE-light.' We offer one-hour online workshops and lots of checklists and guides on our website about strengthening a neighborhood's resilience." *(See OCP&R info on next page).*

Mosher has been involved with emergency preparedness for 20 years and is a leader of his neighborhood group in the hills. "Even during shelter-in-place, one or two motivated residents can get the ball rolling by identifying neighborhood boundaries, telling neighbors about the benefits of getting organized, and starting a roster." He pointed out social media platforms like Nextdoor are especially useful for organizing.

Getting your home and family prepared is something that you can start today. Make a "go-bag" for every family member including pets. Identify an alternate place to meet if you can't get home. Program phones with a mutual out-of-area contact. Store food and water.

Taking a few small steps like this puts you on track to staying safe as a family and as a neighborhood. ■

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Competition Drives Price in October

Closing date	BR	BA	Address	Original price	List price	DOM	Selling price
10/05/2019	3	2	5340 Broadway Terrace	$795,000	$795,000	7	$940,000
10/06/2019	2	1.5	5132 Lawton Avenue	$1,100,000	$1,100,000	4	$1,275,000
10/09/2019	2	1	5701 Broadway	$1,595,000	$1,195,000	91	$1,202,000
10/14/2019	3	2	6110 Colby St	$995,000	$995,000	8	$1,350,000
10/15/2019	2	2	5559 Kales Ave	$1,000,000	$1,000,000	7	$1,635,000
10/16/2019	2	1	6344 Telegraph Ave	$650,000	$650,000	10	$855,000

Homes sold in October closed 18% over the asking price on average.

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Jump Start Your Preparedness Plan

A good first step toward getting better prepared for an earthquake, wildfire, power outage, or other disaster is to reach out to the Oakland Community Preparedness & Response (OCP&R) program. An offering of the Oakland Firesafe Council (www.oaklandfiresafecouncil.org), OCP&R provides awareness training, on-line workshops, videos, guides, and other support to help you and your neighborhood respond to an emergency.

Funded by grants from CAL FIRE and the California Fire Foundation, OCP&R teaches you how to:

- Build an organized and active neighborhood group
- Create an evacuation plan
- Understand emergency alerts and notifications
- Pack your Go-Bag and Stay-Box
- Harden your home and community against earthquake and wildfire

OCP&R walks you through the most important aspects of preparing for and responding to disasters and disruptions that can strike at any time. Please visit www.oaklandcpandr.org/prepare. If your community or neighborhood group would like a one-hour OCP&R workshop covering the basics, email ocpr@oaklandfiresafecouncil.org. Sign up for weekly OCP&R eNewsletters for notices, tips and techniques at www.bit.ly/33c1wXK. ■

Rockridge Library Welcomes New Branch Manager

After working as a branch manager at various libraries throughout the Oakland Library system and serving as "acting" manager at the Rockridge, Montclair, and the Dimond branch libraries, **Sandra Toscano** is happy to be back at Rockridge to serve as it's new Branch Manager.

Toscano's first position as a librarian was with the Brooklyn branch of the Oakland Public Library as the Spanish Language Librarian. She has worked at the Oakland Public Library for over 20 years, eventually moving on to become a Children's Librarian at the Brookfield and Montclair branch libraries.

"Opportunity brought me to work at Rockridge. In 2012 I got a taste of what it was like to work at Rockridge. Pat Lichter, the previous branch manager was temporarily re-assigned to the 81st street branch, and I was assigned to fill in for her while she was away," says Toscano.

"I enjoyed the library, the staff, the community, and the very active community groups in the area. I kept my



Rockridge Branch Manager, Sandra Toscano

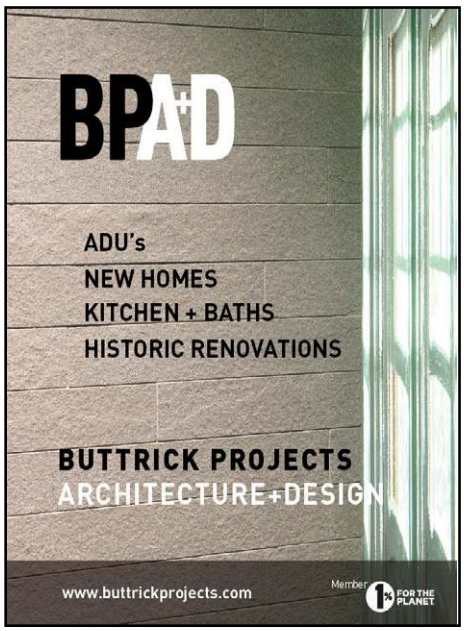
eyes set and focused on Rockridge for the next available opportunity. Now, with the retirement of Paul Schiesser, I had a chance to pursue this opportunity."

Born and raised in East Oakland, Sandra Toscano genuinely loves Oakland — the city and the residents. At the age of 17, she received her very first Oakland Public Library card at the Rockridge Branch Library when it was located in a trailer next to Claremont Middle School.

"I am really excited to be back permanently, this time, and prepared to continue delivering the level of service that the Rockridge community has been accustomed to receiving." ■



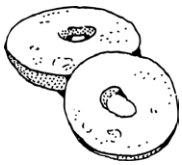




ROCKRIDGE REDUX

These days, local businesses are facing all sorts of challenges and obstacles to stay afloat. As a way to support our local merchants, we will continue to highlight them within the pages of this newsletter. We encourage our readers to support them when looking for goods and services.

Bagel Black Friday



Boichik Bagels will be celebrating its first full year in business on Friday, November 27. Be sure to stop by as everyone who comes to visit will receive a free bagel.



Pavé Fine Jewelry

Founded in 1983 by award-winning jewelry designer Michael Endlich, the Rockridge store has been deeply connected to generations of families in the local community. As of this summer, they adopted an appointment-only model that guarantees a more intimate experience and ensures the safety of clients and team members. As an additional precaution, all jewelry pieces are sanitized after a client has tried them on, so visitors can always feel safe and comfortable shopping in person. As a result, and despite the current health crisis, the store has added team members to its staff. For an appointment, call (510) 547-7000, or email customercare@pavefinejewelry.com.

Merchants in Motion

Ain't Normal Cafe opened late last month in the location previously occupied by Bica (College Ave and Miles), where they sell specialty coffee along with coffee machines, grinders and other supplies. Founder Faunus Lucas also operates a coffee catering business.

Ben & Nick's at 5612 College Ave., is closed for upgrades and improvements; and has applied for a transfer of ownership (according to the signs in front).



Bill McNally's, founded in 1933, is now featuring live music to entertain outdoor diners at 5352 College Avenue.

Fort Point Rockridge is finally open in the location formally occupied by Trappist Provisions. Neighbors can now order to-go cans and bottles at 6309 College Avenue (at 63rd Street).

Healthy Spot Rockridge is now open (3206 College Ave, at Alcatraz) for pet supplies, pet grooming, and dog daycare services.

Namastey Patio is moving into the space left vacant by La Boulangerie (5416 College Ave.), and will be serving beer and wine along with Indian fare (according to the signs in front).

The Point at Rockridge assisted living facility has re-opened its indoor tours.

What's Happening At Levant Rug?

by Judith Doner Berne

It's been a Safeway, The Levant Rug Company, and now, the building at 5450 College Avenue, one of a few with its own parking lot, could become a Red Cross Blood Donor Center.

According to Oakland City Planner Ed Manasse, in order to do so, the Red Cross will first need a conditional use permit from the City of Oakland. He stated that as of October 23 "we have nothing on file, they need both a zoning clearance and a business license. They can't just open without talking to us."

"A long-term authorization for a medical or administrative use without a strong draw for pedestrians would be problematic," said Stuart Flashman, who heads the Rockridge Community Planning Council's Land Use Committee. "A two- to five-year lease may be okay given COVID-19 and the current economic situation." The committee is recommending that the Red Cross and the property owner present their case at an upcoming RCPC board meeting.

"We're going to be responsible just like everybody else," said Matt Jones, Real Estate Project Manager for the National American Red Cross. "We would bring in more foot and car traffic [than retail would]. We have a pretty solid base of donors. We're only going to improve the neighborhood."

Peter Pap, a nationally recognized dealer and appraiser, took over The Levant building and the rug and carpet collection in 2019 following the death of longtime owner, Albert Keshishian. Pap's lease is up in December and he hopes to relocate along College Avenue. "I've developed a real bond with Rockridge," Pap said. "It's important for me to continue a business that started in 1927."

The Red Cross closed its Oakland blood donor site at 3901 Broadway ahead of its lease being up in December. Blood donations can now be made at its offices at 6230 Claremont Avenue, which houses its disaster, armed forces, and international services; training; and volunteerism. ■

Thanksgiving Day Meal Tradition Continues

by Monte McClain

For more than 40 years, the College Avenue Presbyterian Church (CAPC) has been hosting a neighborhood-empowered annual Thanksgiving Day Community Meal. Faced with the current challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, and reflecting on the positive energy generated each year by our collaboration, we recognize that such relational bridge-building is needed now more than ever.

With this in mind, we have decided to radically adapt our traditional community meal to the circumstances of our "new normal" and we'll be providing a to-go meal on Thanksgiving Day from 11am to noon at our campus location at 5951 College Avenue. As this is always a joint project with diverse members of our Rockridge Community, we want to invite our neighbors to help by involving congregational members, local merchants and residents.

In light of pandemic fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and relational distancing, it's an opportunity for us to gather as a community to respond to the needs of those struggling with hunger, solitude, and joblessness. We're adapting the meal to provide 150 to-go meals — free for anyone that comes.

Donations of Money and Food are Gratefully Accepted.

In past years, we've spent $4 for each meal with all the fixings. That means it takes roughly $1,500 to make the whole thing possible. It's because of such annual donations from local people that the meal can take place.

Volunteers Needed

Have some extra time? We will need volunteers to help in our socially-distanced, anti-contagion, protocol-observing effort, to provide this holiday meal. We'll be looking for help with cooking (at distance), preparing the site, serving, and cleaning up — all done with the utmost attention to safety measures.

Visit the Thanksgiving Meal page on the church website at www.capcoakland.org/thanksgiving-meal to sign up to volunteer, or to make an electronic monetary donation; or contact the church office at capc1@sbcglobal.net, or (510) 658-3665. ■

College Avenue Repaving — POSTPONED

by Matt Levy, RCPC Board Member

The repaving work along College Avenue, including South of BART, will be delayed until some point in 2021. Originally slated for late October 2020, the work was intended to take place in two phases, with the repaving between Broadway and Ocean View in the first phase; and Ocean View and Alcatraz in the second. The work is also expected to include the installation of bike lanes and the upgrading of traffic signals at various intersections.

The RCPC will stay abreast of the situation, so look for more details on this project in upcoming issues of *The Rockridge News*. ■





Rockridge Café Owner Calls on Residents for Support

by Judith Doner Berne

"The pandemic has uprooted the financial conditions of our fellow citizens and also our businesses. I would ask Rockridge residents to patronize the small businesses on College Ave including the hard-hit restaurants. Rockridge Café is fighting for its survival…"
— Bill Chung, Rockridge Café owner


Molly Posner has been with the café for many years.

That was the alarm sounded by long-time Rockridge Café owner and Rockridge resident Bill Chung in a recent email to *The Rockridge News*. He was responding to the reality, mirrored elsewhere, of how the pandemic has overwhelmed small businesses, bars, and eateries from Rockridge, Oakland to Rockland, Maine.

eyes on Rockridge

After closing for three months, Chung's venerable breakfast and lunch spot re-opened, following State and Alameda County guidelines, for prepaid take-out, then outdoor dining, and, as of October 26, indoor dining utilizing one-quarter of its space.

"Before COVID, my business was cruising along very nicely," Chung told me, as we sat at one of his handful of sidewalk tables at 5492 College Avenue on a warm mid-October afternoon. "But right now we are in a big hurricane trying to find a place to dock." He purchased heat lamps but decided against building a street patio as many local eateries have done.

"Generally, five outside tables have been enough," he said. "Otherwise you need to add staff. I'm glad we didn't do it."

Early on, Chung applied for, and was awarded, a Paycheck Protection Program loan. Still, he had to cut his staff of 20 in half and allot those who remained to shorter shifts. "Four of us — Robert Gay, Daniel Geary, Marjie Flannagan, and myself — total 138 years here." He also cut the café's business hours slightly, from 8am to 2pm daily. With the resumption of limited indoor service, he has concerns for his employees' safety. "We will be able to hire additional staff and give more hours to current employees," he said. "But it's going to take a lot of work." He's opted for a soft re-opening to see how it goes.

When the now 76-year-old grandfather of three opened the café in 1973, it was about half its present size, and Chung was chef, front-of-house manager, and server for its first year. Then, "I hired an upstairs apartment tenant to work at the counter for an hour or two." For 30 or so of those years, he was open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and for a time, he operated Pizzeria Guglielmo down the street. But when daughter Jenny, now an attorney, and son Kevin, in high tech, graduated from Cal Berkeley, he and his wife Jean decided, "We didn't have to work so hard and maybe we would last longer."

Chung and Jean, whom he met in Taiwan, married after only knowing one another two weeks. They've lived in Rockridge for 45 years. "She's a terrific cook," he told me, "but she doesn't do any cooking in the café." Her role is to manage the café's finances. "Our kids went to Chabot Elementary where both of us spent time in classrooms and I was vice-president of its PTA." He also is a past president of the College Avenue Merchants Association.

Rockridge Cafe, *see next page*

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In addition to outside table service and take-out, the café now offers some inside dinning.

Rockridge Cafe, from previous page

He was 25 when his family, originally from China, emigrated from Taiwan to the United States. Chung left graduate studies in chemistry at California State University, Sacramento, to move to Berkeley where his dad taught *tai chi* and his mother held Chinese cooking classes. "I loved to cook because my mom was a great cook," he said. "I was trained as a Chinese chef through a federally-funded program in San Francisco to teach immigrants new skills — but I never opened a Chinese restaurant."

Instead, he opened his American diner-style café, which, for a while, featured one of his mom's Chinese dishes. Chung created the café's signature Rockridge Breakfast (scrambled eggs with cheese, peppers and onions, home fries and toast), and recently added a vegan tofu breakfast burrito. But he credits chefs through the years for other standouts such as ricotta pancakes, challah French toast, and a chicken bacon ranch sandwich with cheese.

Suzie and John Dahlgren have eaten at the café twice a week for most of the 25 years they have lived in Rockridge. "We go there every Thursday for lunch and Sunday morning for breakfast," Suzie said. "The food is great and so is the service. Robert always saves us a table." On a recent visit, when the café was still only open for outdoor service, saving a table wasn't practical. Rather than wait, they headed down the street. "The owner ran after us and took us to a table, usually used by staff, that was out in the back. So, we had lunch with the garbage cans," she happily relayed.

Rockridge Café was the platform used by former District 1 Councilwoman and Vice Mayor Marge Gibson Haskell to get together with constituents. Haskell, who served from 1979 to 1993, was there "before meetings, after meetings. Everybody knew where it was. It was a neighborhood hangout." But no, she rarely went for a family meal. "I never get to talk to you if we go there," she quoted her late husband, Arthur Haskell.

Gary Lucks calls the Rockridge Café "a community institution" which he has frequented since moving to Rockridge in 1993. "I enjoy the reliably delicious food, consider it to be the best breakfast place in North Oakland, and appreciate it as a venue for community connection where my friends and family gather. It is also my local 'go-to' place for business breakfasts with clients and colleagues."

He and his son Dylan (a remote freshman at Oakland Tech High School), often accompanied by their golden retriever Gus, either get take-out or dine outside during the pandemic. Dylan's favorite is the corn beef hash and his dad is partial to the "Beyond Burger" with Swiss cheese and mushrooms. However, "I'm not ready to eat inside at any restaurant" until vaccines are widely distributed or we have proven, effective anti-viral remedies," Lucks said.

On its website, the Rockridge Café lists a number of celebrity guests including singer-songwriter John Legend, figure skater Kristi Yamaguchi, basketball star Andre Iguodala, baseball star Reggie Jackson, and actors James Avery and Carl Weathers. "But we always feel like this is a local restaurant," adding, "I'm not a quitter; I'm a fighter," and says he plans to keep Rockridge Café a neighborhood fixture.

To comment or suggest topics, please email judyberne@att.net. ■

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Alameda County Goes Orange

On October 13, the State announced that Alameda County is in the Orange Tier of the color-coded, four-tier *Blueprint for a Safer Economy* having met the State's metrics for the Tier for at least two consecutive weeks.

Reaching the Orange Tier is a result of decreasing case and positivity rates, and is due, in large part, to the sacrifices made by the County's residents and businesses, and their adherence to Health Officer Orders and guidance. Collectively, we've slowed the spread of COVID-19. We need to continue to wear face coverings, stay six feet away from each other, wash hands frequently, and stay home when sick or exposed to someone who became sick.

As of October 13, elementary students began returning to classrooms, if their schools were ready.

The following activities are allowed as of the week of October 26:

- Indoor dining; worship services; weddings; funerals; and theaters are now allowed up to 25 percent capacity, or less than 100 people, whichever is less.
- Expansion of indoor gyms and fitness centers, up to 25 percent capacity.
- Family entertainment, like bowling and climbing walls, now allow up to 25 percent capacity.
- Expansion of indoor retail, malls, and food courts, now permitted at up to 50 percent capacity.

As of Friday, October 16, Alameda County allowed additional outdoor activities, including playgrounds that follow the State's guidance. Playgrounds pose a risk because they have high-touch surfaces and involve gathering and mixing of households. Additionally, they cannot easily be monitored to ensure protocols are enforced. Adults supervising children and playground operators should review and follow the State's recommendations closely.

"We are glad to see improving case rates and decreasing test positivity, including among our communities of color, but we caution residents that cases can rise very quickly," said Dr. Nicholas Moss, Alameda County Interim Health Officer.

For the list of activities currently open in Alameda County, visit: https://covid-19.acgov.org/sip.page. ■

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Interior Design Studio Shoshin Persists Despite Burglary

by Jorja Siemons

On the evening of Sept. 7, Shoshin store owner Alexis Smith received a phone call from Bay Alarm that her store's glass door had been broken in. An iPhone and $300, along with the cash box it was in, were all stolen from the College Avenue business.

"It was an all-night affair," Smith said about the aftermath. Because of a recent move to Carmel Valley, Smith was not close to the scene, so she called her father and an employee to assess the damage.

Though Smith is glad the disturbance was minimal, she said she feels sad that the store is boarded up for the second time this year. To her, keeping Shoshin's storefront welcoming during the pandemic has been essential when it comes to "retaining the vibrancy of the neighborhood."

Smith opened Shoshin as an interior design studio in 2017 to shift gears from her job in public affairs. Smith had been working at a "high-stress, high-stakes" job that was unsustainable. After helping friends with home renovations, Smith decided to turn her interior design hobby into something bigger. "Before I knew it, I sort of just fell into this role," she said. "It felt like a great fit."

Today, Shoshin, located at 5914 College Avenue, provides not only in-home design services but also home furnishings and vintage pieces in its Rockridge shop, which opened for the first time last summer. "We love to spend one-on-one time with folks looking for special touches for their homes," Smith said.

Though the pandemic has restricted shop activity, Smith has used Instagram to promote the business and sell decor virtually. She has also seen an increase in personal consultations, which she thinks is a result of people reconsidering their living spaces during quarantine.

As for the break-in, Smith said she doesn't feel angry or violated. "Our feeling on it was more of sadness that someone needs that kind of cash that badly," she said. "This speaks to the situation so many people are finding themselves in."

Smith said she is looking forward to returning to normal shop hours as of Nov. 9, and could not get through this time without Rockridge's support. "I have gratitude for the community," she said. "There are so many treasures, both in terms of the individuals who live here and in the restaurants and boutiques on the street." ■

RCPC Grants, from front page

Tour to the Kevin Faughnan Fund in order to support small community-led projects in the Rockridge neighborhoods. The Program is named for its creator, because of Kevin's love of the neighborhoods and his passion for this grant program.

Participants are encouraged, but not required, to partner with community-based organizations, neighborhood groups, or local business groups. Individual projects are eligible to receive up to $750, all of which must be spent within a year of grant award. Additionally, project proponents must supplement 20 percent of the grant received with other matching funds.

Interested? Reach out to neighbors and share your ideas — build pride in your community by working together on a project. Some examples might include, but are not limited to, programs to clean up litter; mural projects; or community gardens.

The program will be officially launched with detailed information at the November Town Hall. The application window will continue for one month, and successful proposals will be announced in January. ■


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Poetry Book Raises Money to Help Unhoused Women

by Myrna Walton

This past January, three unhoused moms with children and a Southern California realtor specializing in flipping foreclosed houses were in a face-off. The house on Magnolia Street in West Oakland had been vacant for two years before the families took it over, and in an overt, and extreme show of force, a sheriff's squad armed with military-grade weapons ultimately evicted them.

In a city where too many families are living on the streets, thousands of houses sit vacant, sometimes for years (according to U.S. Census data), often because of foreclosures due to predatory lending practices. To Sara Biel and Karla Brundage, this story was a clear call to action.

"We felt driven to support these Black women, moms who found a way to make a positive change, who took on the system in an incredible act of bravery," said Biel.

Biel is a poet, social worker, mom, and Rockridge resident since 2003. She and another long-time Oakland resident, Karla Brundage, co-edited their newly published poetry book *Colossus Home: An Anthology of Lives in and out of Place* as their positive action for change.


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***Colossus:Home*, Edited by Oakland poets Sara Biel and Karla Brundage, illustrations by Francis Baker; cover design by Colin Dodsworth; book design by Fred Dodsworth. Available for $19.95 at www.colossuspress.org.**

Poetry as Activism

In an alchemical process uniting art and activism, the two women created a handsome, 190-page book of poetry and illustrations. More than 60 Bay area artists ultimately contributed their time and writings to benefit Moms4Housing, an Oakland collective of homeless and marginally housed women that grew out of the Magnolia Street eviction. Poet and publisher Fred Dodsworth donated the layout and design for the book, resulting in a professionally published compilation (with an ISBN number!).

Biel explains the book's purpose: "I would hope that people would come to see unhoused folks as our neighbors who need support. These moms were previously employed, striving to make a good life for their families in the town they grew up in. Health and economics often play significant roles in housing loss. Some of us have hard times but have family support that can help us pay rent or our mortgage until we get a new job or recover from an illness. Some of our neighbors do not have that support and lose their homes."

The book is divided into parts, each an investigation into how one inhabits a proverbial home: In one's body; a building; a landscape; a town;

Poetry Book,* see *next page

***Poetry Book,** from previous page*

a country; a memory. Although I am not a fan of poetry, I was immediately hooked — remembering the look, feel and color of my first home, my last, the towns I lived in, the spaces that are embedded in me. But it also opened me to what it must feel like to lose one's home, and worse, to be a silent audience to this suffering:

It's not whether or not there is life on Mars

it's whether you care or you don't
care that you don't care
that you don't feel anything about
what is happening on
your world

— Abe Becker

Biel and Brundage have focused on creating community art/poetry projects in the Rockridge/Temescal neighborhood since 2013. They've collaborated with neighborhood poets and artists to create site-specific, collaborative, visual art and poetry installations scattered throughout the neighborhood. This project, called Temescal Insitu, focused on honoring the history of that neighborhood and imagining visions for its future.

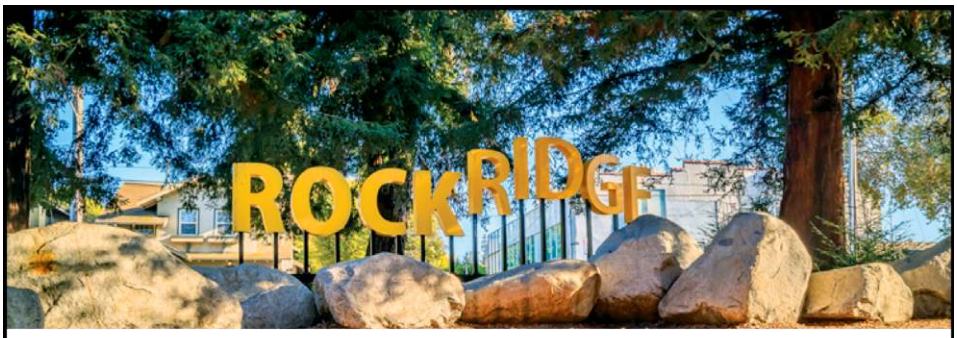
The women were inspired to edit their first *Colossus* book after Trump's family separation policy was announced. "We invited people to write poems based on the Emma Lazarus lines: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free..." The readings evolved into a hand-produced kitchen table book, called *Colossus 1.* Proceeds were donated to Freedom for Immigrants, which provides support and advocacy at the state level.

Do you feel your activism has had results? Brundage says, "Small things. I see them rippling out into the larger world, like *Colossus*, to inspire change. And maybe it's not like changing a law, like *Brown vs. Board of Education*, but we help people get closer to embracing those changes when they happen."

Biel adds, "I do. We are supporting a local organization that has a direct impact on addressing the housing crisis in our community. *Colossus:Home* helps to provide some financial support to Moms4Housing and inspires people to think differently about their unhoused neighbors. When they're leaving Trader Joe's, you know, or getting off BART, or leaving a restaurant on College Avenue, and someone is asking for some help, perhaps it won't seem alarming or annoying. Some of these unhoused people are our neighbors, the people who lived in the house next door."

In case you didn't hear about the happy ending, the corporate owner of the Magnolia house agreed to sell it to the Oakland Community Land Trust, and, after renovation, it will be used by Moms4Housing for transitional housing. This is a victory, and a wonderful step in the right direction to create housing for all Oakland families — yet there is much more work to do. ■





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***Staircases,** from front page*

The earliest stairs were originally built to serve the rapidly expanding "trolley-car suburbs" of Oakland in the years after the 1906 earthquake and fire. According to an Oakland Public Works project manager who designed the set of rebuilt stairs in the Glenview District, the automobile was not the main factor in urban design at the time. In fact, during the 1920s and 1930s, developers built stairs mostly in the hilly areas to be used as shortcuts for pedestrians looking to avoid the long switchback roads. These stairs also provided alternative pedestrian routes to local shopping areas.

One time, I took a Claremont Middle School hiking club on an urban hike. It started at the Rockridge Gates on Broadway, went up Rockridge Boulevard to the Prospect Steps and West Lane, then along Alpine to the Locarno Path. We returned via Oceanview Avenue and Margarido Drive, down to the Ridgeway Path, and finally back to Rockridge Boulevard.

The students and teacher sponsors were exhausted but thrilled to learn that urban hikes could be not only physically challenging but visually exhilarating. In fact, I would challenge any fit person to take the route and not realize the aerobic gains… it is a heart-healthy, outdoor gym that is fun in any weather.

To learn more about the paths and bike routes (including street grades) of Oakland, check out the *Walk Oakland Map & Guide* available at local bookstores. Other excellent guides and fun reads include *Hidden Walks In The East Bay and Marin: Pathways, Essays, and Yesterdays* by Stephen Altschuler; and *Secrets Stairs East Bay: A Walking Guide to the Historic Staircases of Berkeley and Oakland,* by Charles Fleming. These days, it's important to take life one step at a time. ■

Last month, Emerson Elementary launched the "Month of Giving" as a way to help bridge the gap in the school's funding stream. About $10k from school and community members has been raised, but double that amount is still needed to meet the shortfall.

These funds are needed to provide support for important programs during this time of distance learning — art, music, reading intervention, small groups, PE, and more. Donations will be accepted throughout the year, and the school appreciates any support our community can offer. For more information, visit them at www.Emersonschool.net.

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Mail to: RCPC, 4900 Shattuck Ave., PO Box 22504, Oakland, 94609-20131. The deadline for the December issue is November 19 – available on December 4, 2020. For more information, email Susan Montauk at smontauk@gmail.com.

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For info, visit www.oaklandlibrary.org/sidewalkpickup.

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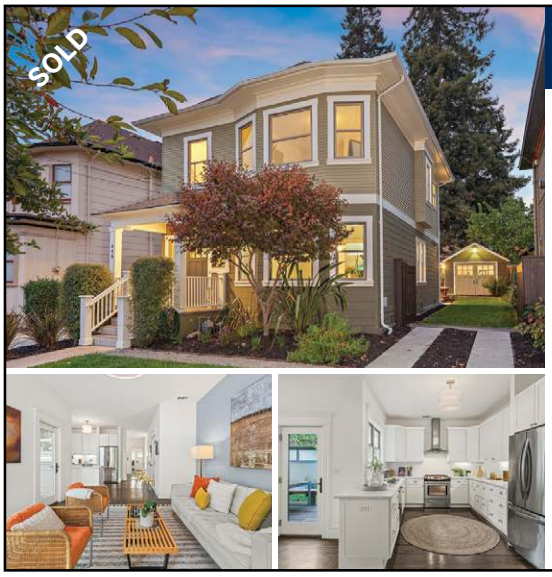
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