THE Rockridge News

www.rockridge.org

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



The Fairies performed on Saturday, August 14, in front of Ain't Normal Cafe.

Photo: Anna L. Marks

Street Fair Puts the "Rock" In Rockridge

by Jody Colley, Rockridge District Association

Every second Saturday through October 9, the Rockridge District Association (RDA) is presenting Rock-N-Stroll along College Avenue — a lineup of outdoor live music, retail and dining discounts, art openings, and activities for all ages.

The next event will be held on **September 11, from 10am to 7pm**. And, like the event last month, it will include more than 20 bands and special offers from over 30 businesses.

On August 14, the streets remained open, sidewalk sales, pop-up vendors, and musicians lined College Avenue from Cole Coffee to Germany's Best automotive. Local bands delivered a wide genre of sounds, including reggae, DJ, rock, classical, soul, and jazz. Some merchants spun records and hosted sidewalk dance parties. In a change from often-congested festival-style stages, the dispersed entertainment encouraged attendees to flow from one end of the district to the other. Bands performed from every nook and cranny available, and some even borrowed electricity from

***Rock-N-Stroll,** see page 14*

In the Early 1970s, the Community Takes Local Development Into Their Own Hands

by Annette Floystrup

This is the third article in a series on the history of the RCPC in Rockridge.

When BART and Hwy 24 finally opened in 1970, the noise, air, and other types of pollution created by the elevated freeway and train tracks spread over large areas of the neighborhood. Fifty years later, due to how sound travels, the increase in noise pollution makes it difficult for residents as far away as the hills above Broadway to use their outdoor spaces.

California air quality regulators say it's unhealthful to put homes, schools, and day-cares within 500 feet of a freeway. Both Claremont Middle

***RCPC History,** see next page*

Two Seats Open Up on RCPC Board

by Leonora Sea, RCPC Chair

The Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) has two board seats that are currently open and available to be filled by board appointment. Michelle Boyd and Matt Levy have resigned from the board as they have both relocated outside Rockridge. Michelle and Matt were elected in April 2021 for terms ending in 2023. Therefore, the board will be pleased to consider volunteers for the two open positions.

Prospective board members must be at least 18 years old and live within the RCPC boundaries. For those who are not familiar with Rockridge boundaries, you can view the map and boundary description on the RCPC website at: https://rockridge.org/boundaries. An explanation of board members' expected time and service commitments, along with the membership eligibility requirements, is posted at https://rockridge.org.

If you are interested in serving on the board, please send the following to info@rockridge.org:

1) Your name, address, and contact info, including proof of residence (photo of driver's license or DMV ID card).

2) A letter of interest including a brief summary of your personal and professional experience; your interest and purpose in serving on the board; anything else you'd like the board to know about you.

The deadline to inquire is Thursday, September 30, 2021. ■

RCPC History, from front page

School and Chabot Elementary as well as many residential dwellings are located within that 500-foot zone, and hundreds more are impacted under certain weather conditions that allow particulate pollution to go much farther — extending more than a mile downwind from the freeway.

Prior to 1986, when leaded gas was discontinued in California, car exhaust typically accounted for 90 percent of airborne lead pollution. As a result, residents in a large area of Rockridge can't grow leafy vegetables, root or tuber crops (carrots, potatoes, beets, turnips) in the now lead-contaminated soil, but must grow them in raised beds filled with clean soil.

Neighbors in the early 1970s realized the City was not developing a plan to revitalize their neighborhood. Rockridge neighbors subsequently organized into six sub-neighborhood areas, each with its own council, coordinated by the umbrella organization of RCPC. As neighbors met and planned what their future should look like, they engaged in smaller neighborhood improvement projects like street tree planting.

Meanwhile, the City of Oakland saw the Rockridge flatlands as expendable. In 1971, speculators bought land adjacent to BART and then asked the City to up-zone the area for major development. Most of the single-family homes around the BART station were to be torn down and replaced by high-rise apartments and office buildings. The retail and pedestrian atmosphere of College Avenue was to be replaced by office lobbies, fast food, and drive-through restaurants. The speculators bought lots on Birch Court and Oak Grove, proposing to build 10-story apartment buildings.

The final straw came in early 1974 when the new owners of Dreyer's proposed to build a drive-through Taco Bell on the corner of Harwood and College, where the Golden Squirrel building is now. People were outraged and saw the proposal as the epitome of suburban culture enroaching into a neighborhood that was already negatively impacted by transit development. The Telegraph Avenue Neighborhood Group (TANG), Fairview Neighborhood Association, and Claremont-Elmwood Neighborhood Association (Berkeley) joined RCPC in opposing the fast-food drive-through.

Neighbors collected the trash thrown on the ground at a local Taco Bell for one hour and hung it in the windows of a popular deli, Curds & Whey (then next door to Yasai Market). Hundreds of neighbors signed petitions against the Taco Bell, and well over 400 neighbors went to the City Council meeting to determine Taco Bell's fate — it was decided that College Avenue would not become a home to fast-food chains.

Armed with this success and backed by the then College Avenue Merchants Association, RCPC presented the City with proposals for new commercial and residential zoning plans for Rockridge's College Avenue that eventually became the CN-1 "Pedestrian Oriented Retail District." The neighborhood-designed commercial zoning became a model for five other neighborhoods over the years, and made College Avenue one of the highest sales tax revenue generators in Oakland (second only to car dealerships) for most of the past 50 years.

A one-block zone on either side of the commercial zone was rezoned for apartment buildings as well as single-family homes, and the single-family homes had the option of building a second house on their lots. For example, Birch Court, a one-block long, dead-end street, two-thirds of which is located across the street from the Claremont school, has 48 households, and, without the schoolyard, would have had many more.

The history of this early grassroots organizing is included in one of the early textbooks of grassroots organizing, *The Grassroots Primer*, published by Sierra Club Books in 1975. It is included with case studies from all over the United States and Canada as an example of effective citizen self-determination and political action. ■

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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Jo Ellis ..... Assistant Editor & Ad Manager
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Are there community issues you'd like to see covered in *The Rockridge News*? Have questions about newsletter distribution? Want to volunteer to be a *Rockridge News* block captain? Want to write a letter to the Editor? We'd love to hear from you.

All articles and letters submitted for consideration should be emailed to: editor@rockridge.org, and must be limited to 600 words. Please be sure to include the author's name, email address, and city or neighborhood of residence. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and brevity.

Newsletter Subscriptions

To subscribe to *The Rockridge News*, send your check for $20, payable to *RCPC* with "Rockridge News" noted on the memo line.

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Views expressed in published articles do not necessarily reflect those of The Rockridge News, its editor, or the board of directors of the Rockridge Community Planning Council.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Some Housing is Better Than None

EDITOR: I was happy to see Jon Gabel's response to my article in the June issue of *The Rockridge News*, "Housing in Rockridge: Affordable Only or Market Rate Too?" because I had intended the article to spur discussion. However, Mr. Gabel misunderstood my argument.

First let's make sure not to confuse "trickle-down economics," which is a largely discredited theory that says cutting taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations will make the economy grow, with "supply and demand," (still a universally accepted economic principle) which says that when you make more of something that is in demand its price will go down.

But that wasn't the point I was making. I was saying that building more apartments in Rockridge, at current rents, would allow a much wider variety of folks to live in our beautiful neighborhood. Mr. Gabel didn't address the simple math I offered on that. He did argue that the Logan, at 51st and Telegraph, isn't a good comp for Rockridge rents. I'm not so sure: it's walking distance to Rockridge BART, will have a Whole Foods on the ground floor and it's next to all those trendy Temescal restaurants and bars.

Of course we should always prefer affordable housing, but as I point out in my article, affordable housing is so costly to develop that holding out for only that will just result in little housing at all getting built in Rockridge. That would be a poor result from an equity and environmental perspective. ■

Ken Rich
Manila Avenue

The opinions represented in the Letters to the Editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Rockridge News, the Rockridge Community Planning Council, or the RCPC Board of Directors.

RCPC Says Thanks to Departing Board Members

by Leonora Sea, RCPC Chair

Farewell to two RCPC Board members. Michelle Boyd and Matt Levy are both relocating out of Rockridge and will be very much missed. As Communications Chair, Michelle has greatly improved how RCPC delivers our message to our neighbors. Matt, the RCPC Transportation Chair, has worked tirelessly to hold Safeway to its agreement with the community to pay for traffic mitigation made necessary by the redeveloped store and property. He has also kept the neighborhood abreast of the College Avenue repaving project, and the fate of Slow Streets. Thank you both for your hard work and dedication to the RCPC. ■

Rockridge Community Planning Council — Land Use Committee Meeting

The next Land Use Committee meeting will be held on **Wednesday, September 22, at 7:30pm**, via Zoom.

To attend the meeting, email landuse@rockridge.org, or call (510) 652-5373. The meeting is open to the public, check www.Rockridge.org the week prior for event details. ■

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What's Best For Rockridge?

EDITOR: External political influence on board elections for our small neighborhood 501c(3) organization by outside politicians such as Schaaf, Skinner and Wicks is not appropriate or welcomed as stated by Jon Gabel in his Letter to the Editor *(Rockridge News,* July 2021*)*. These politicians staunchly support removal of R1 zoning for Rockridge (and for the entire state) to destroy the integrity of cohesive neighborhoods such as Rockridge.

As has been shown by RCPC's Land Use Committee studies, "affordable housing" in this neighborhood is not financially feasible. Further, "affordable housing" is a meaningless code phrase used by housing activists and real estate interests to support building ever more market rate apartment buildings that will quickly obliterate single family dwellings if R1 zoning is banished.

Wasn't destruction of the Rockridge neighborhood by routing Highway 24 directly through its heart horrific enough? Now that the neighborhood has successfully reinvented itself after long years of extremely hard work, the City is bent on destroying it once more.

Our elitist government officials think they know what "is best" for us. They summarily and deliberately ignore the wishes of most of their constituents. ■

J.W. Yager
Margarido Drive

Ridge Phase 2: A Need for Action

EDITOR: Addressing the issues posed by the dormant Ridge Phase 2 site is long overdue. Decisions on the future use of this significant community land resource should not be left to either an out-of-touch property owner or outdated Safeway master lease terms. Leaving the site dormant deprives Oakland of much needed tax resources, opportunities for addressing housing and other community needs and leaves a visual blight on the Pleasant Valley/Broadway intersection.

Rather than awaiting action by the property owner, the City of Oakland, using the specific plan provisions of California's Planning and Zoning Law (Gov. Code sec. 65450 et seq.) should take the initiative and prepare a Specific Plan for the site. The plan would set permitted and required uses, density, open space, design (e.g., building height and bulk) and pedestrian and vehicular circulation conditions along with policies such as minimum/maximum parking, affordable housing requirements, household type and unit size preferences (e.g., families, seniors) and financing obligations.

The specific planning process should include participation of a diverse community advisory committee and opportunities for wider community information and input throughout the process. It is important that the process examine a range of options that represent varying community interests and a thorough analytical comparison of these choices, including rigorous economic feasibility analysis so that the community can make well-informed choices. Infeasible "wish list" choices are to be avoided. Options should include variations in affordable housing requirements, different density ranges to maximize housing opportunities and economic feasibility, and site coverage and height requirements to maximize open space.

Adoption of a specific plan is also a means of enhancing the value of and expediting use of the site. With full development and environmental entitlements, costly and time-consuming delays can be avoided, making the site more attractive to prospective developers and investors.

Environmental Review

A required EIR should be undertaken as an integral part of the planning process. Each option under consideration should be subjected to a through and consistent environment and economic feasibility analyses and comparisons of impacts and advantages prior to selection and refinement of a preferred plan.

This process contrasts with an all-too-common EIR practice in which the preferred plan is prematurely selected and token "straw man" options are then only discussed in the final phase of the planning and EIR process. Unfortunately, this approach deprives the community of needed information to make informed comments and recommendations prior to selection of a preferred plan which can lead to controversy and challenges to the final EIR. ■

Tom Cooke
Buena Vista Ave

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Rockridge Not the Answer to Affordable Housing Needs

EDITOR: Stu Flashman's very well-considered series of articles about the economics of affordable housing make an uncomfortable fact very clear: "affordable housing in Rockridge" is a contradiction in terms.

Housing in Rockridge is not affordable, and no amount of good intentions will make it pencil out. If Oakland can find dollars to subsidize affordable housing, those dollars will go much further building housing in neighborhoods where an acre doesn't cost $15m. Our conscience may feel better helping one family live here in Rockridge, but let's instead take care of two or three families by putting those resources where they go further.

Yes, this could sound like NIMBY-ism or worse. By all means, raise the taxes on our back yards to support affordable housing in Oakland. But our good intentions should not lead us to misallocate Oakland housing resources where they would have the least positive impact: Rockridge. ■

Peter Shepard
63rd Street

Rockridge Takes Part in National Night Out

— by Angela Moore, Neighborhood Services Division, OPD

On August 4th, the City of Oakland had about 256 registered National Night Out events, including block parties and cookouts throughout the city. The Neighborhood Services Division and the Oakland Police Department would like to thank the residents of Rockridge who participated in this annual community-building event that builds police/community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie — both of which make our neighborhood safer and a more caring place to live.

National Night Out is geared to enhance the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement, while bringing back a true sense of community. It provides a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances. Again, thank you all for making National Night Out A Success. ■



Hosted by Kris Singleton, Rockridge neighbors gathered together on Locksley Avenue.
Photo: Angela Moore

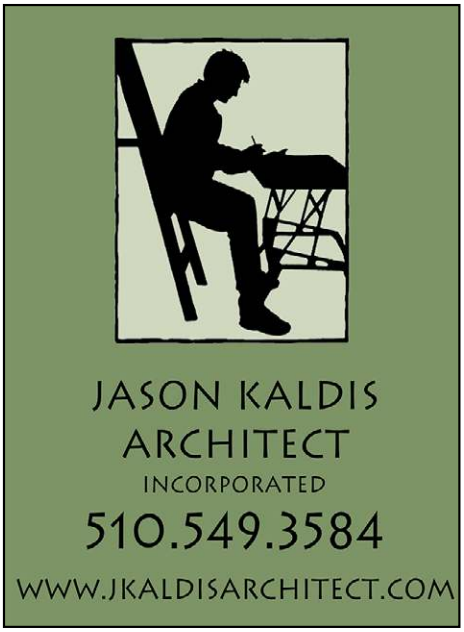
DAY OF REMEMBRANCE: FIRESTORM 30

A day of remembrance marking the 30th anniversary of the Oakland/Berkeley Firestorm.

October 2, 2021, 10am,
Rockridge BART Station, Firestorm Community Mural. ■

HOUSING IS KEY

Renters who are having trouble paying rent or utilities, or landlords with tenants who are behind on payments, can apply for federal relief at HousingIsKey.com: including 100 percent back rent and future rent.
You can also call the Rent Relief Call Center at (833) 430-2122. ■





Creek to Bay Day CleanUp at Frog Park and Rockridge Temescal Greenbelt

by Will Sheldon

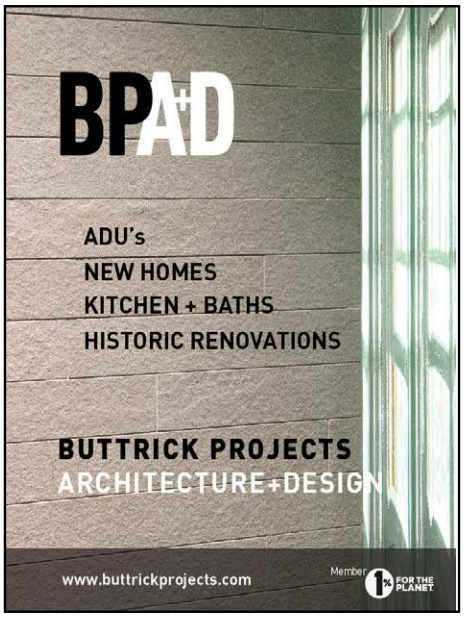
Join Friends of the Rockridge Temescal Greenbelt (FROG) and neighbors to spruce up our Temescal Creek and FROG Park at the annual "Creek to Bay Day" cleanup on **Saturday, September 25, from 9am to 12pm**. All are encouraged to attend and be part of International Coastal Cleanup Day — a truly worldwide effort to make our planet's waterways cleaner and healthier.

Temescal Creek, between the pond at Big Frog and Clarke Street, is a pump-controlled water feature, and the water returns to the creek through the Little Frog grate on Clarke. When we clean up trash and debris, not only does our park look better, but it also keeps litter out of the creek, bay, and ocean.

While we have been unable to run this creek for a couple of years due to needed cleanup and repairs, we are hopeful that we will be able to get it running again soon, and we need your help. Tasks include weeding, pruning, trash pickup, raking, and sweeping. Families and groups are welcome. Students needing service hours for school can receive a signed letter verifying their participation. Tools and gloves will also be provided, or bring your own and make sure they're well-marked as yours.

A sign-in table will be located at Big Frog near the play structure. Coffee and snacks will be available for volunteers. For more info, contact Friends of Frog Park (info@frogpark.org); or look up FROG Park and Temescal Creek online at https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/creek-to-bay. ■

blenoir@oaklandca.gov
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Local Street Trees Need Our Help, and Gray Water Will Do Just Fine

by Amos Alan Lans



Amos Lans and Tom Spiritbringer watering a crepe myrtle tree on Boyd Avenue with kitchen sink gray water.

The prolonged drought has deprived our street trees of the water they need to feed their branches, resulting in the dropped branches, a form of self-amputation. In addition to providing shade, street trees improve local air quality, making it easier for residents to breathe during air emergencies. Recent studies from the extended 2018-2020 wildfire seasons show that the Air Quality Index (AQI) was 25 to 50 points lower (healthier) within 25 yards of mature street trees. Trees breathe out oxygen and filter particulates from the smoky haze, making unhealthy air less hazardous for all of us to breathe.

Here's some good news. A group of residents on Boyd Avenue's 5300 block have been watering our street trees. Meg Levine, Amos Alan Lans, and other Boyd Avenue neighbors can be seen many evenings, carrying out pails of used kitchen sink water, shower, and other household gray water to thirsty oaks, liquid amber/American sweetgum, birch, crepe myrtle, ornamental fruit, and other street trees. Other neighbors have installed gray water pipes that transport washing machine water to trees in their yards.

Handy guides for watering nearby trees are available at www.ebmud.com/watersmart and https://www.ebmud.com/customers/pipeline/2016/05/your-trees-need-tlc/. They make suggestions for how, when, and how much to water your trees, and how to look for signs of stress. Another cool tip for caring for street trees is to install a Treegator. Treegator Slow Release Watering Bags deliver water deep below the soil surface, encouraging strong root growth. For information, go to https://www.treegator.com. ■

Rockridge to Biafra — The Piano Connection

by Nadine Rosenthal

During the gloominess of Covid, Ayala Avenue resident Shelley Coleman chatted with neighbors who lived alone and asked them how they were coping with the pandemic. Their heart-felt need for engagement was palpable. A light bulb went off.

"We need to have some fun. Let's put pianos on the street," she said, and launched the idea to search for pianos to bring the community together through music. People on Nextdoor were advertising very old pianos they wanted to give away, and before she knew it, some 14 pianos were moved to her backyard and driveway.

A city permit and insurance were obtained to close off the 5900 Block of Ayala for July 18th and some of the pianos were placed down the center of the street. A diversity of people came with their sheet music, families, and friends to join in on the fun. Some came out from their homes when they heard the music; others stopped and listened when they happened to be walking by.

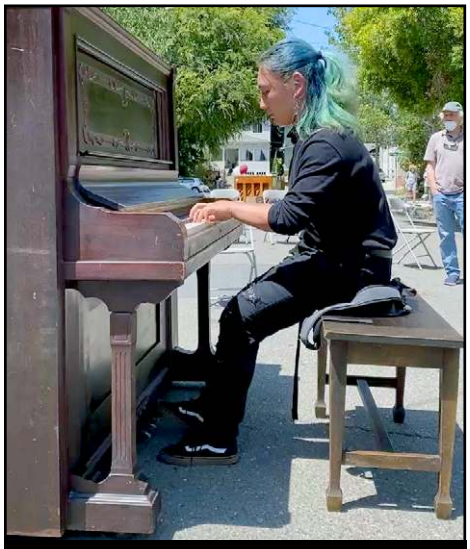
Pianists from New Orleans sang and played cabaret tunes, a teenager knocked out ragtime, a concert pianist performed Chopin, and at the end of the day a group of people played and sang songs from the Broadway musical *Rent*.

It was an afternoon of spontaneity, joy, and enjoying the company of others. There was enough space for people to gather comfortably, with chairs to sit on, and lots of hand sanitizer. Approximately 300 people passed through including Councilmember Dan Kalb and his wife, Valarie, who came and schmoozed with Dan's District 1 constituents.



Event organizer Shelley Coleman, and Bay Area resident Obie Godwin Obinna Okorie, collaborated to bring pianos to Biafra.

Photos: Evelyn Hoch



Yunyi Ji, 26, M.M.San Francisco Conservatory, playing Chopin.

"It was such a wonderful and creative event. As a new neighbor, I'm finding out more each day that Rockridge is a pretty friendly place to live," said Hallie Smith.

"I'd been looking forward to this event since I heard about it," said Yunyi Ji, 26, M.M. San Francisco Conservatory. "Playing music for the community is exactly what I love doing."

"It was a creative adventure for me," said Shelley. "I was so happy after such a difficult year, just being out and about, chatting with neighbors, being immersed in the joy of it all."

Some wondered about the destiny of the pianos. Shelley worked with her piano mover, Matteo Porcedda (www.firsthandpianomovers.com), who introduced her to Obie Godwin Obinna Okorie, a Bay Area resident originally from Biafra, Nigeria. Obi wanted to ship the pianos to the School of the Blind, Imo State, Nigeria, for students to acquire piano skills.

The morning after the event, Obi moved the pianos to a container at the Port of Oakland to be shipped to Biafra. He will soon be visiting them to see how they weathered their oceanic voyage from Rockridge to Biafra.

Nadine has been a Rockridge resident for 34 years. She can be reached at nadine@nadinerosenthal.com. ■

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What's the Buzz on College Avenue?

by Anna L. Marks

A recent report from real estate firm John Cumbelich & Associates compared retail occupancy rates for the districts of Montclair Village, Grand Lake, and Rockridge. It noted that occupancy rates of these similarly-sized business districts have "outperformed Walnut Creek," and that Rockridge occupancies are "near an all-time high." It's great to hear that our our neighborhood is rebounding well from the pandemic, and there is much else to report.

Welcome to the Avenue

Several new shops have hung out their shingles along College Avenue, and they are all welcome additions to the neighborhood.

Boba Guys (5925 College Ave) has opened at the old Dreyer's Ice Cream shop location, serving up specialty drinks and artisan bubble teas.



Caroline Kim of Sunday Bakeshop with a tray of freshly baked chocolate hojicha croissants.

Photo: Anna L. Marks

Sunday Bakeshop (5931 College Ave) is a French-inspired Asian American bakery run by chef and co-founder Elaine Lau, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America.

Pressed Juice (6300 College Ave) offers farm-to-bottle, cold-pressed juice, wellness shots, and plant-based soft-serve Freeze. Stop by and try their watermelon pomegranate juice.

Planterday (6004 College Ave) opened on July 14th, and is run by Bay Area natives Yumi and Matt Day, who began selling plants from a pop-up trailer before opening the brick and mortar shop. As official sponsors of Crisis Support Services of Alameda County, Planterday donates a portion of all monthly proceeds to support volunteer efforts for suicide and crisis prevention. This is in honor of Matt's father who took his own life when Matt was young.



Maison d'Etre owners Patty Brunn and Fred Wornack, pictured in front of their store circa 2002.

Anniversaries

Businesses have come and gone over the years, but many have survived the test of time. Some are mentioned below, and *The Rockridge News* congratulates all of them.

George & Walt's (grandfather and son) bought the lot and built the building at 5445 College Avenue in 1945. The bar/restaurant is now operated by Walt's granddaughter, Barbara, and is owned by her mother,

The Buzz, *see next page*

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The Buzz, from previous page

Gail. In honor of their 75 years in business, they refurbished the original neon sign that was installed on their storefront in 1946. They are planning a party in December.

Zachary's Chicago Pizza, at 5801 College Ave, opened in 1983 and has been a Rockridge staple for 38 years. In 2003, owners Zach Zachowski and Barbara Gabel retired and sold the company to its employees, who now own 100 percent of the restaurant.

Andrea Serrahn, fashion designer and founder of the clothing boutique **Serrahna**, began her love affair with textiles while growing up in Wisconsin where she learned to design and sew her own clothes. After a trip to India, she was hooked on hand-printed and hand-stitched design. She opened her shop 19 years ago at 5303 College Avenue.

77Salon (5358 College Ave) is a certified sustainable salon. As a member of Green Circle Salons, 95 percent of its waste is recovered and repurposed. Make an appointment and help them celebrate their 13th anniversary in the neighborhood.

When Patty Brunn and her husband Fred Womack met as florists, they realized they shared a love of buying and selling reclaimed junk and found objects. Their passion is evident in their store **Maison d'Etre** at 5640 College Avenue, which opened 26 years ago and "celebrates life at home." "We live in the neighborhood and love being a part of it."

Enoteca Molinari owner Joe Madison celebrates 10 years at 5474 College Avenue where he offers an array of Italian fare — specializing in house-made pasta and Italian wine. "My Nonna's cooking, and my Italian-American family here in Rockridge and Oakland were influential. When I started visiting my cousins in Italy, I really got inspired."

Joyce Gardener opened **FIT Clothing** 19 years ago at 5707 College Ave. She is grateful to have survived the recession in '08 and still be here after Covid. "We still have the same loyal customers who have supported us over the many years. Our mission has always been to be a gathering place to find great clothes, share information, and support women. Now, coming out of this pandemic, we need to dress our customers and get them out of their sweats!" ■

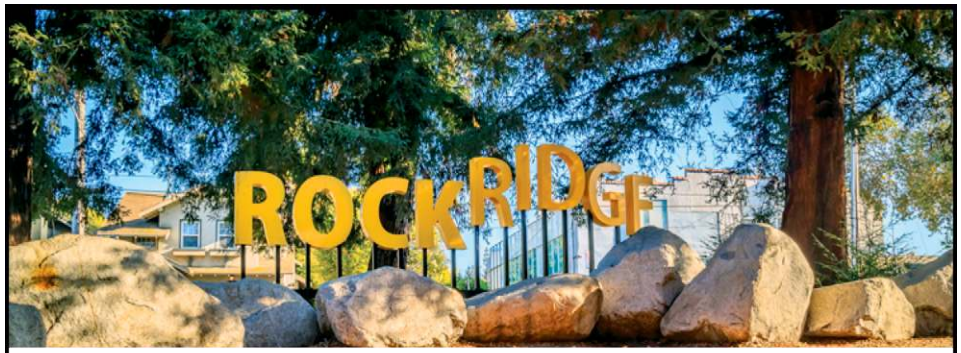


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A Modern-Day Damsel Reinterprets Folktales

by Judith Doner Berne



Author Bobbie Kinkead weaves a tale of female empowerment and overcoming stereotypes.

Photo: Judy Berne

Bobbie Kinkead didn't read many of the popular children's books as she grew up in the 1950s in what she describes as a "macho-male society" fostered, in part, by the nine military bases located within her hometown of Colorado Springs.

"Where I lived there were no Nancy Drews or Bobbsey Twins," she said. What she focused on and identified with, particularly during her middle school years, were folk and fairy tales that featured the damsel in distress. "I identified with the damsel. She's very innocent, she's always weak. She's always saved by the males."

Those folktales were supplemented by the stories she made up as a child, fishing the nearby creek and wandering the Colorado woods; as a young adult, hiking the frozen tundra of Alaska; and as a wife, mother of two, and grandmother of three, living for 51 years in Rockridge.

Indeed, the grounds around the home she shares with her husband Don echo on a mini scale (or as close as you might get in Lower Rockridge) the woods and waters in which she grew up. Lush foliage, aided by Kinkead's very green thumb, permeates the dry bed where Temescal Creek once flowed uninhibited.

Her early fascination with folklore and storytelling has permeated her life, culminating in a new book, *Damsels Overcome,* subtitled, *Feminist Empowerment,* which she is self-publishing.

Fifteen years in the making, this labor of love is a collection of 20 folktales, fables, legends, fairy tales, and myths from different countries, originally told by male story tellers during the 6th to the 18th centuries. "It might be in the male narrative," she said, "but it's really about the female." Her favorite: Little Red Riding Hood.

It is also part memoir. She shares her interpretations of each story filtered through her experiences as a modern-day "damsel" and influenced by the fact that her mother wasn't allowed an education. "Women only get married; their duties are to the family," her mom was told. So, at age 14 she was farmed out to work for another family where she would "learn women's skills."

Not so for Kinkead. After earning a traditional bachelor's degree in elementary education with a minor in fine arts from the University of Colorado, she created her own course of study. In her mind, she attained was what akin to a "second bachelor's" when she learned to compose, write, and illustrate an original story through the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. She attained a so-called "masters" in the art of storytelling at Dominican University in San Rafael. And she acquired a self-styled "doctorate" in how to trace a story's origin at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

"The protests and laws fought for by grandmothers and my peers saved us," Kinkead writes. "Let go of the 'he' in she; the 'male' in female; the 'man' in woman." In their place, she

Eyes on Rockridge, *see next page*

eyes on Rockridge



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8/5/2021	4	2	5310 Boyd Ave	$1,795000	$1,795000	13	$3,075,000
8/13/2021	3	2	5252 Lawton Ave	$1,125,000	$1,125,000	16	$1,400,000
8/16/2021	3	2	5863 Chabot Ct	$1,295,000	$1,295,000	15	$1,855,000
8/20/2021	2	2	5340 Broadway Ter	$795,000	$795000	17	$835,000

Homes sold in August closed 38% over the asking price on average.

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Eyes on Rockridge, *from previous page*

suggests we use: maiden, matron, gal, lady, feminist, girl, crone (a wise older woman). And, of course, damsel. (As you see, I wasn't able to follow her advice in writing this column.)

"Damsels who had the ability to overcome imposed helplessness, weakness and inferiority were the survivors: courageous, talented and intelligent," she writes. "Wise damsels did what they needed to exist within the male social norms of their time. As I discovered, males are also victims of these norms."

The book's color-splashed cover depicts a collage of damsels from folklore to present day, as well as animals central to the book's varied tales. A simple drawing of an adult damsel fly with its elongated abdomen, delicate body, and two pairs of wings marks each chapter.

As you may have guessed, it's an unusual book — one that Kinkead said wouldn't appeal to traditional publishers. In some ways, it's her thesis, complete with each tale's historical background and an extensive bibliography. Although many years in the making, she was able to finish it during Covid, when "I got to be quiet."

Kinkead's cozy home office is cordoned off from the living room by bookshelves and a patterned curtain. Surrounding her desk and beneath its red-painted ceiling are shelves dotted with tiny clothespin characters she has created, boxes of story-telling props and puppets, and books, notebooks and files on her damsel stories.

She works most days from 10am to 5pm, with a break for lunch. "I spend a lot of time thinking while I rock in any rocking chair with a peaceful back and forth rhythm, even a swing." Two basket chair swings overlook the garden.

For years, Kinkead recounted folktales to youngsters who attended her morning pre-school, to audiences through the Storytelling Association of California and at the Asian Art Museum, and of course to her own children and grandchildren. "Telling the story and writing it are two different skills. When you're on stage, they're looking at you and you can see they are with the character. It's much harder to write because you don't know where your reader is."

Carolina Juarez, Kinkead's longtime next-door neighbor, was part-way through *Damsels Overcome* when contacted by *The News*. "I've always been impressed with Bobbie's storytelling talents. She also has been a delightful neighbor, a wonderful artist, and a fabulous gardener." Now Juarez is further impressed by "the academic part of it and her digging into the male and femaleness of all these stories."

"Bobbie's like a sister to me," Jeanette Murrell said. The Rockridge moms bonded when they each ran day care centers out of their homes. Later, the two became master gardeners and had a part-time landscape business. "I feel I grew up with her," Murrell told me. "I intend to read the book."

You can order copies of Damsels Overcome *through Rockridge's local bookstores, East Bay Book Sellers and Pegasus Books, Oakland. To comment or to suggest topics for future columns, please email judyberne@att.net.* ■





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Escaping a Wildfire: A New Technology To Get You Out Safely

by Skip Fogarty

Watching the advance of the 2017 North Bay Fire, Alameda Fire Division Chief Dave Winnacker pulled his truck over on a hilltop overlook. While providing mutual aid to Sonoma County, he saw an angry wave of orange flames chewing its way up the slope — swallowing homes along the way. Instantly he knew the conflagration could not be stopped. He switched gears to plotting an evacuation strategy.

Tracking the complexity of the fire's behavior in multiple locations at once, Winnacker realized that technology should be better applied for use in wildfire scenarios. So he took his ideas to two seasoned Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. Together, they embarked upon developing a new wildfire communication and notification platform now known as Zonehaven (https://www.zonehaven.com/).

Now, after two years of work and funding from the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), Zonehaven is up and running in most Bay Area counties and widely across the state. In our city, thanks are due to the Oakland Fire Department for their collaboration. The Oakland Firesafe Council and volunteers with Oakland Community Preparedness & Response (OCP&R) program also assisted with implementation.

"We helped populate the Zonehaven system with localized data," reports OCP&R manager Doug Mosher. "We entered and verified data for 112 discrete Oakland zones, including major streets, emergency siren locations, and critical evacuation sites like schools, hospitals, childcare and assisted living facilities."

Utilizing improved communication and predictive tools, the system better coordinates fire agencies and first responders. Zonehaven also offers a sophisticated public alert system based on strictly defined "zones" within neighborhoods. Satellite imagery, real-time traffic patterns, topographical maps, current weather conditions, and recent rain patterns are all fed into Zonehaven's algorithm to give residents a hyper-localized, timely-as-possible warning of approaching fire danger.

Next month marks the 30th anniversary of the Oakland Hills Firestorm, when many of the 25 people who were lost were trapped while trying to evacuate. In such a scenario, Zonehaven could have saved lives. But you don't need to go back decades to understand the wrath of California wildfires. The North Bay fire consumed a quarter-million acres, including large swaths of the wine country and Santa Rosa. Large parts of the West are on fire as you read this. In fact, eight of the 10 largest wildfires in California history have occurred in the last decade.

So, it's imperative to prepare. Plan ahead about what you need to pack if you have to leave home. Then plug into official notifications during the event. Zonehaven can notify you when it's time to go and suggests the safest escape route using real-time traffic data. On their website, you'll see a color-coded evacuation status indicator for each zone — None, Alert, Leave Now. You can choose several notification options including home phone, cell phone, text or email — or all of them. AC Alerts is our county's primary emergency notification system.

"In an emergency, OPD and OFD public information officers can also spread the word via social media apps," Mosher says. "Residents may also hear evacuation orders via loudspeakers or from door-to-door notifications by police and fire personnel." Local TV and radio stations like KQED (FM) and KCBS (AM) are also good sources.

For info, see OCP&R Guide #02, Notifications & Warnings at https://www.oaklandcpandr.org/guides/. ■

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Planning Ahead is Key

— by Annette Floystrup

There are things we all can do to prepare for the next firestorm, because it is a question of when, not if, it will occur. First and foremost, get out of denial. During the Oakland firestorm, which lasted for more than three days, there were people who lost everything after watching the fire approaching them — some for hours and some for more than a day. They could not and/or would not believe that the fire would reach them. Never underestimate the speed and potential range of an urban wildfire.

1) Have a plan. Make specific plans for very young children and any mobility impaired family members, and don't forget your pets. Acquaint yourself with the new Zonehaven app and know your zone-code and evacuation zone — this will be critical *(see article on previous page)*.

2) Prepare to evacuate ahead of time. A great, downloadable pre-evacuation guide is available from Redfora, an emergency preparedness company, as a downloadable PDF. Redfora also has a section with excellent articles on preparing for a variety of disasters (https://redfora.com/blogs/wildfire-pre-evacuation-checklist-guide).

If you do not have access to a car, make arrangements to find a nearby evacuation buddy who can take you with them. NO gig service will be operating in the evacuation zone. Evacuating on a bicycle is very doable, but will limit what you can take with you unless you have a bicycle cart.

3) Have a Go-Bag ready and easily accessible. There are many online resources for lists of what to pack, but one of the best is from CAL FIRE. https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-set/emergency-supply-kit/ and another great resource is https://www.oaklandcpandr.org/guides/ which contains a downloadable evacuation checklist, among many other useful guides. Guides are available in a number of languages.

Planning Ahead, *see next page*

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE: FIRESTORM 30

A day of remembrance marking the 30th Anniversary of the Oakland/ Berkeley firestorm.

October 2, 2021, 10am,
at the Rockridge BART Station Firestorm Community Mural. ■

Risk and Protection from Wildfire: A Zoom Event

— by Lucy Armentrout

Wildland fires are increasingly moving into suburban and urban environments, so it's always a good time to collect information on how to protect your loved ones, your home and your neighborhood from fire. Captain Mitch Matlow, a firefighter and fire safety educator will present details and strategies on home fire safety, via Zoom, on **Monday, September 13th, at 7:30pm**. The event is free and all are invited to attend.

Captain Matlow has over 25 years of firefighting experience and has fought major fires including the Oakland hills. In addition to his regular work with one of the largest local metropolitan Fire Departments, Captain Matlow works as a Public Information Officer for state and local fire departments and has acted as a fire safety educator at various Bay Area agencies.

Attendees may submit specific questions related to fire safety, firefighting, and fire protection strategies before the presentation, or put them into the chat box during the presentation. The event will be recorded and a link will be available to all those who sign up. Attendance requires completion of a google form with your email address, which can be found at www.bit.ly/FireSafetyEvent.

Note: There's a possibility that Captain Matlow will be called at the last minute. (He's already been called away once this summer for fire service duties.) If this happens, the event will be rescheduled and enrollees will be sent the new date and time. For details, email Lucy@FineEastBayHomes.com. ■

Community Comeback: Picnic at Lake Temescal

by Sarah Kidder

Comeback from what, you ask? Next month marks the 30th anniversary of the October 1991 Oakland/Berkeley firestorm — an event that subsequently brought many people together as they rose out of the ashes to rebuild homes and reconstruct lives.

On Sunday, Oct. 17th from 11am to 3pm, the North Hills Community Association (NHCA) is hosting a gathering that will bring friends and neighbors together once again for a day of fun and tribute at a Community Comeback Picnic. Enjoy a beautiful day at the lake with loved ones, neighbors, and new friends as this will go a long way to rebuilding the sense of community so needed right now.

The event is open to all and free to attend. There will be food trucks, music and a tribute to those who perished in the 1991 fires. Fire safety preparedness groups will also be on hand with information.

Interested in what happened in '91? NHCA's collection of stories, relics, and resources is ready for you. Learn more, or signup for picnic sponsorship/to volunteer at northhillscommunity.org. Find them on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram: @nhillscommunity. Sign up to have your story included in the online archive at www.northhillscommunity.org. ■

Planning Ahead, from previous page

4) Include planning for mental health. Doing so before, during and after a disaster can be overlooked, but it is critical. Many firestorm survivors acquire PTSD related to the event. This can include auditory, visual and olfactory triggers, which can last for years.

To this day, the smell of wood smoke, once evocative of camping trips and cozy fireplace evenings, puts me on alert, though the effect is mild and temporary now. Both www.oaklandcpandr.org and www.listoscalifornia.org have mental health guides available in over 20 languages.

5) Make sure your home insurance is in order. Have a regular review with your insurance agent. Be sure that your replacement costs are based on current building costs and codes. Check the status of your rebuilding capabilities on your lot, and how long you will have paid housing expenses. It is very important that you upload copies of all insurance related documents to the cloud.

California's wildfires are causing the entire insurance industry to re-evaluate the viability of insuring homes in areas known to be at high risk like ours. In the aftermath of the '91 Firestorm, many victims found out that they were woefully underinsured.

Most found that, regardless of coverage, they had to battle their insurance companies for proper compensation. Be sure to verify that your insurance company is not planning to drop you based on your location. This did happen to many people after the '91 Firestorm. ■

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Rock-N-Stroll, from front page





Hope from Hella Juiced (pictured above) at one of the many pop-up booths along College Avenue.

Top photo:Anna L. Marks / Bottom photo: Chris Jackson

neighboring businesses when needed — creating a pop-up concert vibe.

According to Gretchen McMann, owner of Happy Trails Home, "The event was super successful for me. It was welcomed with open arms, especially since Covid has had such a dramatically devastating impact on our small Oakland businesses."

Stephanie Dominguez Walton, Rockridge District Association President and performer at Rock-N-Stroll, said, "The day had a great Oakland vibe. It was wonderful to see people relaxed, enjoying themselves, and dancing with each other. I can't wait to connect with my community like that again."

For more information about Rock-N-Stroll events, visit https://www.rockridgedistrict.com/rocknstroll. ■

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The deadline for the October 2021 issue is September 16 (available on October 2).
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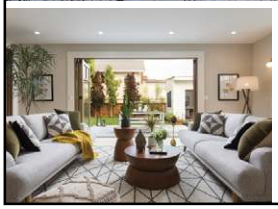
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