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

Firestorm Preparation: Then and Now

by Annette R. Floystrup

Recently, the Berkeley City Council and the Berkeley Fire Department issued an advisory to all residents of the Berkeley Hills to "Be ready to leave the hills when the Berkeley Fire Department proclaims 'Extreme Fire Weather' due to forecasted low humidity and high winds." It is likely that the Oakland Fire Department (OFD) and the Oakland City Council will follow suit, as precisely the same conditions exist throughout the Oakland hills.

Firestorms have occurred in the same hill areas in 1923, 1970 and 1991. Due to extreme and ongoing drought conditions from climate change, the next one may happen sooner rather than later.

Now that we've reached the 30-year anniversary of the '91 Oakland Firestorm and held the joint disaster preparedness Town Hall with the NCPC and RCPC, I thought I could offer some perspectives to share with our friends and neighbors.



The BART Firestorm Tile Wall consists of 3,000 handmade tiles created by those impacted by the wildfire.

I once taught disaster preparedness seminars to corporations under the aegis of the National Safety Council, together with Henry Renteria, the Oakland City official responsible for disaster preparedness during the Firestorm and Loma Prieta.

For those who missed the Firestorm, following are a few quick facts.

The Oakland Hills Firestorm was

FIRESTORM, see page 12

Rockridge Built A Library, 25 Years Ago

by Annette R. Floystrup

"Rockridge is the only community in the nation to finance and drive to completion the building of a local library." — Kevin Starr, California State Librarian (September 1996)

The above statement is as true today as it was 25 years ago when Rockridge neighbors raised $3.5 million to build a 15,000 square foot library with two large community meeting rooms and approximately 75,000 books, CDs, DVDs, audio books, video games, magazines and newspapers for visitors of all ages.

The original Rockridge branch library opened in 1919, and moved into a storefront at 5701 College Avenue, across from Claremont Junior High, in 1924. That space, now Ain't Normal Cafe, ran the length of the building from its College Avenue frontage down Miles. This small

LIBRARY, see page 14

The Halloween Parade Is On!



by Ronnie Spitzer

Continuing our neighborhood's great, ghoulish tradition, the Rockridge District Association (RDA) and the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) invite you to celebrate Halloween on College Avenue.

Join the holiday fun for kids of all ages, rain or shine, on **Sunday, October 31, from noon to 2pm**. Participating merchants will host trick-or-treating on along both sides of College Avenue.

To join in the costumed pageant, meet at the BART station by noon. You can also start trick or treating from any location along the Avenue at noon.

At 1pm, come to the Rockridge Library for games and entertainment. Masks for all participants, young and old, are required.

The event will be canceled if air quality is poor on parade day. ■

LATE-BREAKING NEWS:

Legislative Update

by Stu Flashman, RCPC Land Use Committee Chair

Of the three bills *The Rockridge News* previously focused on in the July 2021 issue, SB 9 and SB 10 have been signed while the third, AB 1401, addressing off-street parking requirements, died at the end of the session. All three bills were supported and/or co-authored by Rockridge's legislators: Senator Nancy Skinner and Assembly Member Buffy Wicks. ■

See Rockridge.org for the full report.

What You Need To Know about Video Footage When Filing A Police Report

by Angela Moore, Neighborhood Services Division, OPD

The Greater Rockridge NCPC had a very interesting discussion at the August meeting about crime reporting with personally captured video. With a lot of input from our Community Resource Officer, Meeran Gichki, several points emerged.

First, posting a report of a crime on Nextdoor is not reporting it to the police, even if you include a video. The police can't see the posts you put on Nextdoor.

Second, we found that some people have obtained our Community Resource Officer's (CRO) email address (well, it is on the NCPC website), and have sent him videos of crimes they've witnessed. The videos varied from home security camera footage of house invaders to hand-held footage of car break-ins.

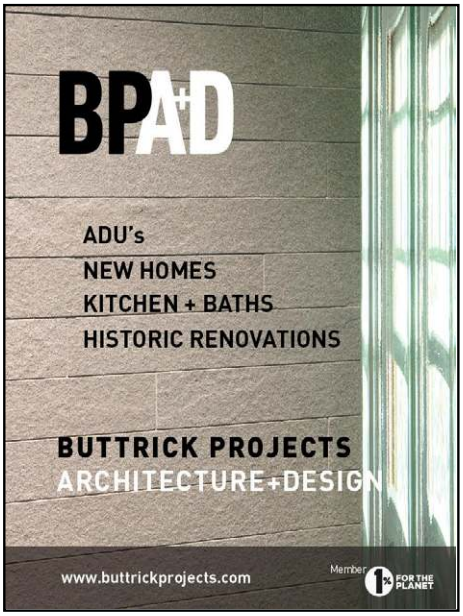
Although this is helpful, Officer Gichki made it clear — he can't act on a video unless it's associated with an incident number for that crime. The incident number is the official record of a reported crime, and without an official report, the police can't take it to the DA for possible charges should they catch the criminals.

If you see a car break-in and capture it on video, can you report it if it's not your car? Sorry, no, you can't. It's only a valid report if the victim calls it in — in this case, it would be the car owner. This is less likely to be an issue with footage from a home security camera unless your system gets a photo of a burglar breaking into your neighbor's house. In that case, your neighbor has to file the report, but when they do, you can submit the video, with the incident number. *Without the incident number, they can't use the video in evidence.*

This is very significant for auto break-ins, which tend to be done by gangs all over town. So, if you have an official report of a break-in and a solid license plate number for the criminals' car, OPD could use that information to charge someone who may have done this elsewhere in Oakland (or even surrounding communities).

Two other points: If the victim of a crime doesn't file a report, it never happened. And, if you, a crime victim, do file a report, you have to be willing to go to court and press charges against the criminals. Otherwise, the DA can't charge the crime, even if there is an official report with an incident number.

To get an incident number, call OPD at (510) 777-3333, their non-emergency number. You can also get an incident number by filling in the Report a Crime link on the OPD website. The majority of crimes in Rockridge are for property crimes that have already happened. Don't call 911 (iffy if dialed from cell phones) or (510) 777-3211 for this type of crime as the emergency number is swamped with reports from more violent sections of town. ■



RCPC Land Use Committee Meeting

The next Land Use Committee meeting will be held on **Wednesday, October 27, at 7:30pm**, via Zoom. To attend, email landuse@rockridge.org, or call (510) 652-5373. The meeting is open to the public, check www.Rockridge.org for details.

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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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.

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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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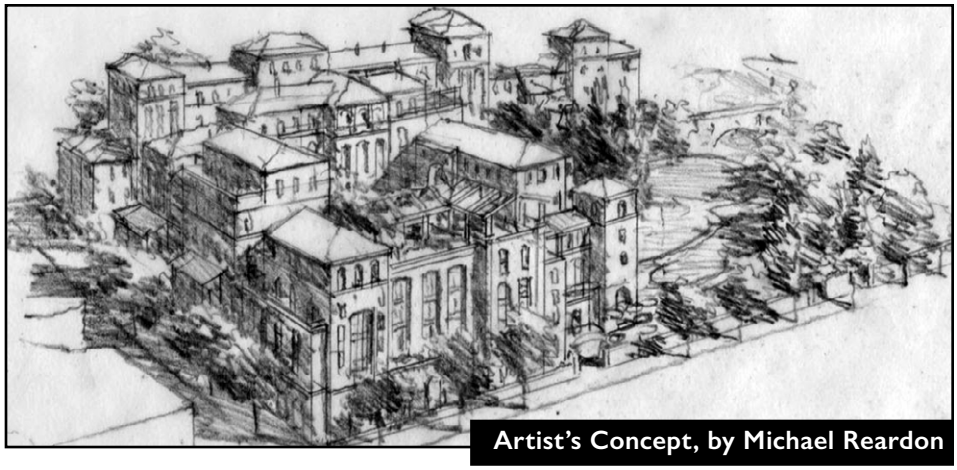
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What's Happening At The CCA Site? "Quite a Lot!"

by Myrna Walton, Upper Broadway Advocates (UBA)



Artist's Concept, by Michael Reardon

The ongoing conversation continues to evolve between the Rockridge community and site developer Emerald Fund regarding the redesign of the now-closed California College of the Arts (CCA) campus. Although the Oakland Planning Department has declined to provide a date for the draft EIR to be publicly available, the developer, Emerald Fund, thinks it will be released before the end of the year. Meanwhile, work is proceeding in three key areas.

Architecture

Recently, the developer noted that in order to create a design that would recognize the context of the surrounding neighborhood, Emerald is bringing in a new architectural firm. "Mithun is widely recognized for deep community engagement and excellence in architectural design, particularly in the 7- to 9-story typology," according to Emerald.

While there is a wide variety of building styles and sizes in Rockridge, including many multi-unit buildings, the overwhelming context is traditional, human-scale and open to the street. It is quite a challenge to translate this welcoming neighborhood character into two 7- or 8-story buildings, but it certainly is possible. *(See the drawing on this page as an example of how that challenge could be met.)*

Landscaping and Trees

There has been a great deal of brush clearing and tree removal on the site recently. According to the City Arborist Tod Lawsen, the only trees he authorized for removal were those he inspected and found to be dead or very near death.

We also toured the site with Kevin Conger, Founding Partner of CMG Landscape Architects, a sub-contractor to Emerald. He noted that many of the trees are nearing the end of their lifespan or are suffering from the effects of climate change. UBA is committed to saving as many as possible so that when this project is built, some old trees will remain, supplemented by new ones.

CMG emphasized the need to bring the community into the proposed park through interesting programming which would preserve and continue its arts history. This might include studio classes in the two historic buildings to be retained, outdoor art workshops, sensitive placement of many of the beautiful and interesting art works scattered about the site, art fairs and sales, and historic markers.

Design Standards

In the meantime, at the request of The Design Review Subcommittee of the Oakland Planning Commission, Emerald hired SiteLab Urban Studio. Their charge is to develop criteria that "will build on the retained character-defining features and support contextual development that is influenced by the surrounding neighborhood." We sincerely hope this means that the design criteria will recognize the largely traditional aspects of the residential neighborhood as well the history of arts and crafts at the CCA site.

Recognizing the severe need for affordable housing, UBA remains committed to a dense development, no higher than seven stories, with 20 percent of the units slated for low-income residents. We will continue to make our views known to the developer and appreciate Emerald's willingness to listen and respond.

Send comments to UBAOakland@gmail.com. ■



Rockridge Resident Releases Homemade Rock Album



James Utterbeck is a PhD chemist and solar researcher during the day, but at night he's a rock producer with a passion for music. His debut album, *Fire Whale*, including his new single "Breath Smoke," is now available on streaming platforms.

"I have been chipping away at a home-recorded concept album for the past 15 years, and I've used the pandemic in my Rockridge apartment bedroom as an opportunity to finally make it a reality. I spent a lot of time walking and biking around Rockridge listening through draft versions and working out edits. The song is about unrequited love and how reading *Moby Dick* inspired me. The lyrics and intense emotion paint a clear picture of madness and longing in the high seas."

The video appears on Fire Whale's YouTube channel as of Oct 8. Follow @firewhalemusic on all social media. ■

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-4BD 2BA Tudor home, detached garage, level in, sweet yard, gorgeous architecture, 3 blocks to College Ave, 5809 Ross, coming soon
October is Awareness Month for > Breast Cancer, Emotional Wellness, Financial Planning, Italian-Americans, Adopt-a- Dog



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COMPASS

Conversations Towards Solutions — Stand Up For a Safe Oakland

by Angela Moore, Neighborhood Services Division, OPD

Chief LeRonne L. Armstrong is continuing his "Conversations Towards Solutions" in Beats 12Y and 13X. This is the Chief's mission for a #SAFEOAKLAND, building off the momentum of the "Stand Up For A Safe Oakland" march and rally at Lake Merritt.

On **October 21, from 6pm to 7pm**, we're focusing on Rockridge. Come for the conversation and leave with solutions. Let's gather, unite and reclaim Oakland and put a stop to the violence. The goal is to visit different neighborhoods each week holding smaller, more intimate conversations with the community.These conversations will continue until meetings have been held in every beat in Oakland.

Please register in advance for this upcoming Zoom meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcod-iprzIpHdcos_h7SV4YW9ySS-kVzPXqk.

For information, contact Karen Ivy at: secretary@rockridgencpc.com. ■

Chabot Fall Carnival: A Rockridge Tradition

The Fall Carnival fundraiser for Chabot Elementary School will be held **Sunday, October 17, from 12:30 to 4:30pm,** at Chabot's Upper and Lower Yards, at 6686 Chabot Rd.

Events include DJ and dancing, bake sale, game booths, messy arts and crafts projects, puppet show, costume contest, pumpkin decorating, balloon animals, tasty food, and prizes.

All Rockridge residents and neighbors are welcome to join in the fun, and, as always, admission is free. All proceeds benefit the Chabot PTA. ■

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Apples to Apples

EDITOR: In his letter in last month's *The Rockridge News*, "Some Housing is Better Than None," **Ken Rich** states, "let's not confuse 'trickle-down economics' with 'supply and demand'" as it relates to the housing market. This assumes that there exists a single unified housing market, but that is a fallacy: supply and demand are different in different price ranges of housing.

The "housing market" actually consists of multiple, non-intersecting sub-markets delineated by price. Just as increasing the production of Porsches has little effect on the market for Toyota Corollas, significant affordable housing is not created as a result of market-rate construction.

There is solid econometric evidence of this as shown in "The Maze of Urban Housing Markets" by Jerome Rothenberg, *et al*. There is a summary along with some information from this book and from other sources on my website, www.PreserveRockridge.com (click on "Trickle-down").

Overriding current R-1 zoning to build large market-rate apartments in Rockridge would benefit real estate developers and speculators, but not those who need affordable housing.

Jon Gabel
Ocean View Drive

Market-Rate Housing Helps Reduce Overall Rents

EDITOR: Thanks to *The Rockridge News* for one last opportunity to engage with **Jon Gabel** on the issue of housing affordability and the part that our neighborhood can play in addressing the issue. I trust that after this, we will give other readers a chance to weigh in on this important topic.

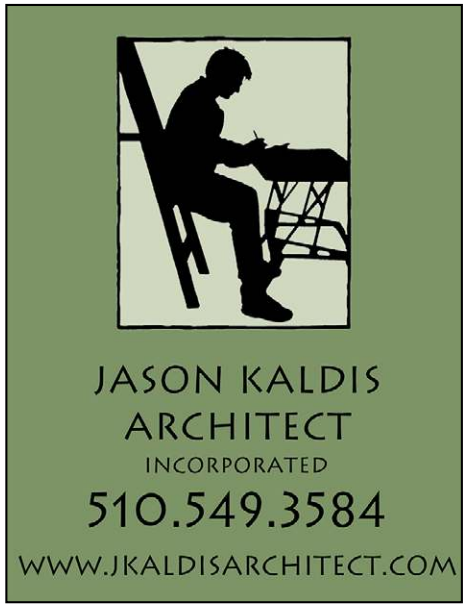
Mr. Gabel argues in his latest letter to the editor *(see article on left)* that building more market-rate housing will not contribute to a reduction of housing prices overall and on his website cites a book published in 1991 for evidence on this. Our readers will be interested to know that there is an increasing body of much more recent academic work on this subject.

A paper found here, for example, https://www.lewis.ucla.edu/research/market-rate-development-impacts/ reports that of six recent academic studies on the subject, five find that new market-rate development lowers rents across the income spectrum in the same neighborhood. The other one reaches mixed conclusions.

In my original article, published in the June 2021 edition of *The Rockridge News*, I simply argued that new market-rate apartments in Rockridge, as relatively expensive as they may be, are still much less expensive than buying a house of the same size; and thus, we should support them as a way to welcome a wider range of people to our neighborhood. It's nice to know that these new apartments might also help reduce existing rents in the neighborhood too.

Ken Rich
Manila Avenue

Have an opinion you'd like to share with our readers? Send it to: editor@rockridge.org.







LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, cont'd

No Tree Removal At Ivanhoe

EDITOR: I want to add my voice of distress about the 20 or more trees, mostly Live Oak, to be removed from a private property on Ivanhoe Road and Miles. As a neighbor, I don't know what power my objections would hold, but as a Rockridge citizen, I can protest the removal of a sizable carbon sponge from my immediate environment and its resultant loss of mitigating the effects of pollution and climate change.

I hope the permitting department has the power to persuade them that that is a way too ambitious wipe-out of an oak grove — a bold grab of our history. Thank you for reading this.

Harriet Gulassa
Harwood Avenue

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Not All Technology Is Accessible

EDITOR: I'm impressed yet concerned by the new Zonehaven emergency evacuation system *(Rockridge News, Sept 2021)*. The hitch is that the last mile is problematically underdeveloped for a crisis.

The first concern is reliance upon everyone learning a novel, esoteric, 7-character alphanumeric identifier for their particular zone, e.g. the library's zone identifier is "OKL-E029." It's just not realistic to anticipate everyone remembering such an identifier for themselves, dependent friends or relatives, or schools and workplaces. They may not remember where they wrote it down, let alone be able to look it up in an emergency when communication networks may well be damaged or overloaded.

Secondly, I was wondering about the possibility of marking the identifier publicly on municipal property, like fire hydrants. However, who owns these geographic divisions? Zonehaven was incorporated in Delaware in 2019 and sold this June to Genasys Inc., maker of LRAD, a sonic weapon used to disperse crowds, which is a bit worrisome as well, as the technology does have the potential for abuse.

Zonehaven provides software-as-a-service. What happens down the road when Zonehaven inevitably decides to maximize profits in obligation to its owners? This geographic division system needs to be under public ownership. The Zonehaven system was developed with public money from FEMA, after all. Ideally, zoning would be firmly rooted in local ownership, for the greatest community engagement. This crucial public communication function must be put out for public bid.

On the tech side, it's easy for a single database to translate a multitude of brain-breaking unique identifiers into humanly relatable names. That would be a far more rational system design than expecting a multitude of humans to learn yet another agglomeration of letters and numbers, and recall it without warning in a crisis. Perhaps zone residents could elect their own identifier, a process that would simultaneously engage the community in disaster preparation?

Eric Neville
Thomas 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.





The Relevance Of Redistricting

by Casey Farmer and Louise Rothman-Riemer

It's that time again, when every ten years our political districts are redrawn. Redistricting occurs to adjust for population changes and to ensure that districts comply with laws, such as the Voting Rights Act. Redistricting provides the framework for our voice in our political process.

Census data is currently being analyzed to evaluate which districts are over and underpopulated. Now is an important time for the public to express what their communities of interest are, where they are located, and why they should be maintained in the same districts.

Thanks to voter-approved ballot measures, California and Oakland must redraw their districts through independent redistricting commissions. A commission that strives to keep the districts balanced and respectful of existing communities is less likely to create gerrymandered districts to suit the demands of any political group or party.

Oakland: 440,646 people ÷ 7 Districts = ~ 62,900 people per district
oaklandca.gov/boards-commissions/redistricting-commission

Voters approved the City's Independent Redistricting Commission in 2014. This cycle will be the first in which City Council districts, and corresponding School Board districts, are drawn by an independent commission, not by elected officials.

An interesting note about District 1 (Rockridge) is that it encompasses the most politically active residents of the city. According to research by Julie Lo, a graduate student at the Goldman School of Public Policy, it had the largest number of registered voters (44,681) and a whopping 80 percent of them voted in the 2018 election cycle.

The Commission is holding public hearings on **Oct. 13 and Nov. 10**. At the last public meeting, the Commission heard testimony from folks about Communities of Interest (COI) that should be considered when redrawing the districts. The Commission has until the end of the year to approve and finalize new district maps. It meets at 5pm on the second Wednesday of the month.

Alameda County:
1,682,353 people ÷ 5 Districts = ~336,000 people per district
https://redistricting2021.acgov.org/

Under new State law (The FAIR MAPS Act), the process will be more transparent and accessible through required noticing, language access, and public hearings. The Board of Supervisors launches its process with two public input hearings: the next one will be held on at **October 12, at noon**, and will occur online at https://bos.acgov.org/broadcast/.

The Board seeks your input on "Communities of Interest," or geographic areas where residents share common economic, social, or cultural interests. Input can be submitted through the website's mapping program, written testimony, by phone, or during its upcoming hearings. The Board of Supervisors will publish a draft map on **October 26**. Subsequently, residents will have five weeks to weigh in before a final vote on the map.

State of California:
https://www.wedrawthelinesca.org/

The California Citizens Redistricting Commission just completed a listening tour of COI input hearings and will begin line drawing soon. Input is still welcome and encouraged.

Want to learn more? The Oakland League of Women Voters (LWV) is hosting a webinar on Redistricting on **Monday, October 4, from 6-7pm**. Register at: https://bit.ly/3kpEk0D

Casey Farmer serves as the Director of Community Engagement for Alameda County's Redistricting 2021 as well as Secretary of the RCPC. Louise Rothman-Reimer has operated her small business on College Avenue for 26 years and is a previous-past President of the LWV, Oakland. ■

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Firestorm 30:
A Personal Story

by Annette R. Floystrup



Oakland-Berkeley hills firestorm: Pearman collection. Oakland Public Library, Oakland History Room.

We had been in Tahoe for a week, returning on Saturday, October 19, 1991, just as the fire was starting up. Driving home, we listened to the Big Game (Cal vs. Stanford) on the radio and heard interspersed reports of a fire in the canyon by the stadium. Sunday morning, I called my parents to let them know we were home and that the sky was the same golden color as in Rome which, I realized, was for the same reason — smoke and air pollution. I told them that the little fire in the canyon must have blown up again, and we needed to get busy.

We spent hours filling forty 30-gallon garbage bags with pine needles from the 145' tall Monterey pine just outside our front door. We swept the roof and scraped the ground clean, then wet the roof and the area around the house thoroughly. We had to wear double canister facemasks to breath because the sky was dark with swirling smoke, soot and ash all day that Sunday.

Our cats were stashed in the kitchen with their carriers while we methodically packed our personal papers, including the all-important insurance documents and my business papers. Then we packed the pictures (no digital papers or pictures back then), meaningful mementos like handmade gifts from family, and finally valuables like jewelry, etc. We threw open cupboards, closets and drawers and took lots of pictures for the insurance company — you will never remember what you had unless you do — and then went shopping for food at the Lucky's.

On our way home, we stopped and watched the fire from the Claremont schoolyard fence. We watched as tree after tree was fully outlined by fire and then exploded from top to bottom like torches. And we saw house after house afire. The entire area was on fire as far as the eye could see. Prepared to evacuate, we had benefitted from a wind shift that stopped the fire from spreading further down Chabot Road and along the freeway edges. The fire came very close, to Golden Gate Avenue at Hwy 24, and to Margarido Drive above Broadway.

We spent days and nights listening to thousands of loud explosions — car gas tanks, electrical transformers and ruptured gas lines booming night and day. And all day long we heard helicopters flying back and forth scooping up water from Lake Temescal, and we tracked the fire's progress. Hwy 24 was closed, and hundreds of fire vehicles were parked there. Volunteers prepared food for the firefighters, and exhausted firefighters could be found resting here, there and anywhere before starting out again.

A PERSONAL STORY, see next page

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A PERSONAL STORY,
from previous page

Driving the barren and desolate moonscape left behind just a few weeks later, I saw many shiny, silver rivers of melted aluminum engine blocks and burned-out hulks of cars. All that was left of most houses was a chimney or just a foundation. Dozens of my friends or their families lost homes in those three days.

Many lost precious works. Noted author **Maxine Hong Kingston**, who daily walked by our windows through St. Albert's on her way to coffee on College, lost a newly completed manuscript. An architectural historian friend on Chabot Road lost his slides and picture collection — his entire life's work. Many precious works of art were destroyed, including many canvases from the Society of Six painters.

A friend's mother, just widowed, lost her home and all its contents. As she and her mother later sifted through the ashes, they found her mother's platinum wedding band, totally blackened by fire, but intact, and **Michael Endlich's** staff jewelers at Pavé spent weeks cleaning and restoring it without charge. Many similar kindnesses were extended to the wildfire survivors.

Brooke Levin, who had gone to work for Mayor Elihu Harris after her term as RCPC Chair, had a brilliant idea that was quickly implemented. The old Safeway on Claremont Avenue was turned into a one-stop disaster recovery center with representatives from all the utilities, agencies and insurance companies needed to help Firestorm victims begin the process of recovery.

Afterward, Levin's great idea became the model for FEMA's Disaster Recovery Centers nationwide. It was also Levin, along with Oakland Heritage Alliance's **Annalee Allen**, who was the impetus behind the Firestorm memorial wall at the Rockridge BART station.

In the aftermath, we put our passports and all-important life documents in a bank safety deposit box. We bought archival negative sleeves and stored them there as well. Now most of our older photos have been scanned and we have our devices all backed up to the cloud as well as portable hard disks, but none of that tech existed 30 years ago. ■

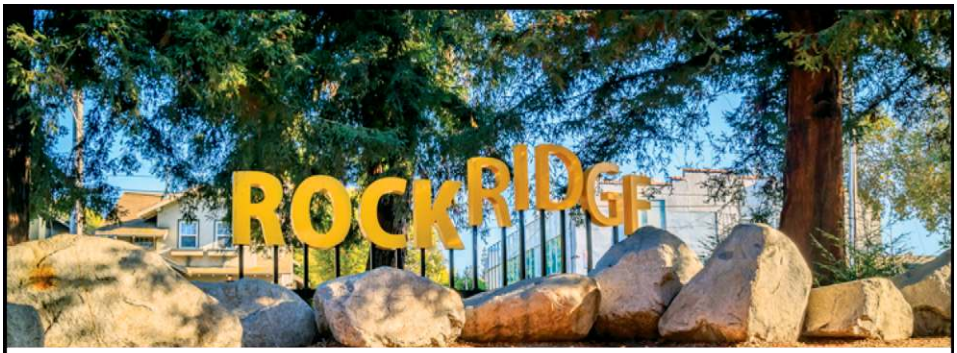


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Unrepresented Patients Discover a Very Unlikely Ally

by Judith Doner Berne

Seniors in high school aren't likely to give much thought to senior citizens. But 17-year-old Aaron Davis, who attends The College Preparatory School in Rockridge, seems to have made the elderly his focus, now and perhaps for the future.

I connected with Davis thanks to an email from **Nancy Epstein**, his Rockridge neighbor. "I'm 66 years old and find Aaron a joy to be around," Epstein began. "But he's not just a thoughtful and wise teenager. He's an activist. He regularly helped our single 92-year-old neighbor with light house cleaning, medications, and getting to bed."

That 92-year-old neighbor, Agostino Isola, is now 97 and living in an assisted living facility in San Francisco, according to his niece, Marie Crociani.

"I think Aaron's an amazing young man," she told me. "To be so young and have that kind of patience with someone who is older. Aaron and I talked about when he can come to visit," since the Covid restrictions have been lifted. "My uncle just loved his neighbors." But Davis also enjoyed knowing Isola. "He told me about growing up in Italy."

The teenager's interest in helping older people may have started when his mom "dragged him" (his words not mine) to play piano for residents of Merrill Gardens and Piedmont Gardens senior living centers several years back.

"I didn't like my parents listening when I practiced," the once-shy teenager said as we sat in the backyard of his Rockridge home. But after he played background music while the residents dined, "a lot of them stopped by and told me how much they enjoyed it. I guess I was breaking the monotony a little bit."

He grew up in Rockridge, attending Chabot Elementary before going to Black Pine Circle in Berkeley for middle school. His dad, **Mark Davis**, is Canadian and a retired math professor. His mom, **Judy Chang**, is Taiwanese and an optometrist at Kaiser Oakland.

Davis's affinity for older people also comes from a close relationship with his grandparents, particularly his mom's parents, who live in Orinda. "They did a lot of work helping to raise me," he said. That included picking him up for swim lessons and practices that resulted in his becoming a competitive swimmer and making him homemade potstickers. "I'm so glad they live so close and are able to play such a large role in my life."

Indeed, it was helping his grandmother learn to use her new cell phone that gave Davis another idea. He set up a tech support booth at Merrill Gardens. "It was me and some Cal students, one was my cousin," he told me. "We helped them access photos or post on Facebook. But they (Merrill Garden residents) really came mostly to talk to us." That came to a halt when Covid hit.



Photo: Judy Berne

This past summer, Davis launched an informational website for "unrepresented patients."

Covid also made staying in close touch with his grandparents more difficult. Although he and his family continued to visit, they were careful to mask and maintain social distancing. "It definitely felt like our relationships were really strained," he told me. "My grandmother was texting a lot more frequently."

With that in mind, he came up with "Operation Valentines" to connect with residents of senior living facilities, many of whom were still confined to their rooms. He asked via

DAVIS, see next page



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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
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***DAVIS,** from previous page*

Nextdoor if "you and/or your kids can help me make Valentines. They don't have to be slick or professional, as it's the thought that counts." Subsequently, residents of Pacifica Senior Living in Oakland Heights and Redwood Gardens in Berkeley received over 400 valentines this year.

This past summer, Davis launched an informational website for "unrepresented patients," many of whom are senior citizens who have no friends or family to advocate for them. It emphasizes the importance of having an Advanced Heath Care Directive and includes links to medical and legal experts.

A highlight is his video interview with Dr. Karl Steinberg, an experienced geriatrician, bioethicist, and hospice/palliative care specialist

eyes on Rockridge

in San Diego County. The website includes this note from Davis: "Please excuse my 'ums' and repeated 'thank you's,' I'm pretty new to interviewing." You can access the website at: https://adavis4377.wixsite.com/unrepresentedpatient.

"Not many teens would devote the majority of their summer to working on such an important and relevant topic," Epstein said. "He is truly committed to helping the elderly population."

That commitment extends to the Asian American and Pacific Islander community (AAPI) as Davis saw attacks, particularly against AAPI elderly, grow and happen as nearby as Oakland's Chinatown. He interned this summer with the Stop AAPI Hate Youth Campaign, creating social media content and lesson plans for educators on racism and youth mental health.

Currently, he's working with a team of college students interviewing organizations that provide escorts or meal delivery for AAPI elders to try to identify best practices. "The program I contacted is Self Help for the Elderly in San Francisco, which focuses on helping low-income Chinese immigrants," Davis said. "My work has been completely virtual, so I haven't been able to act as a chaperone to any elders in the community."

To Davis, living in Rockridge has made him "really grateful to have been able to grow up in such a relatively tightly knit community. Having an atmosphere conducive to learning is another huge plus." He remembers going to the Rockridge Library when he was younger for their storytimes. "Now I mostly visit to pick up ACT prep books or movies for family movie night." He hopes to stay within California for college with an eye toward an eventual career in geriatrics.

After spending the end of his sophomore year and most of junior year in online classes. "I feel it's a lot easier to learn in person," Davis said, echoing most students' and teachers' sentiments. "But I got to be pretty good at ping pong," referencing the game table set up in his yard. "This past year has been kind of an escape."

To comment on this column, please email judyberne@att.net. ■

Editor's Note: This column marks Judy Berne's 10th year writing for The Rockridge News. *Thank you, Judy, for all your wonderful contributions.*

ELDER SERVICES IN OAKLAND

Aaron Davis's website for the unrepresented patient:
https://adavis4377.wixsite.com/unrepresentedpatient

Alameda County Adult and Aging Services:
www.alamedacountysocialservices.org/
510/577-1900

Meals on Wheels of Alameda County:
https://www.feedingseniors.org/

Center for Elders Independence based in the East Bay:
https://cei.elders.org/







Firestorm, from front page

brought under control after three days, but today's urban wildfires often burn for weeks. A study by UC Berkeley researchers applying the 1991 Firestorm conditions to the Berkeley Hills concluded that it would take at least two hours for everyone to evacuate. Oakland hill neighborhoods are very similar.

At its height, 1,500 firefighters and 450 engines from all over Northern California fought the Oakland Firestorm. By the time it burned out, it had consumed 2.5 square miles, or 1,600 acres, of mostly residential neighborhoods. Twenty-five people were killed, including an Oakland police officer and an OFD Battalion Chief. One hundred fifty people were injured. The fire destroyed 3,469 homes and apartment units and 2,000 automobiles. Ten thousand people were evacuated.

Rockridge, both hills and flats, has a number of quite narrow streets, often only one lane in each direction, which make orderly evacuation very difficult. The 25 people died trying to escape flames that moved so fast they barely had time to react. The deaths occurred in and near the Hiller Highlands neighborhood, just above Upper Rockridge, on two narrow roads, Buckingham and Charing Cross Road. People were killed in their cars when they were blocked by falling debris, including burning cars falling from hillside roads above them, and many died overcome by the fire as they were running or crawling downhill after having to abandon their cars.

First and foremost, we must let go of the idea that this is a "hills problem" that does not affect those of us living in the flats. While the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) areas of the Oakland/Berkeley Hills and foothills (respectively designated by CAL FIRE as "Very High" and "High Fire Hazard Severity Zones") are at particular risk, much of Oakland is at risk of a wind-driven firestorm from the Diablo winds that come from the inland valleys.

Had the Diablo winds not died down during the 1991 Oakland Firestorm, that wildfire could have burned all the way through West Oakland to the Bay. According to my friends in OFD who worked the Firestorm, multijurisdictional firefighting teams put a great effort into keeping the Claremont Hotel from catching fire. The backside of the hotel did catch fire in a smaller wildfire in the fall of 1970, but had the Claremont Hotel burned in the Firestorm of 1991, the next fallback fire line to hold was Shattuck Avenue. It was estimated that, at a minimum, all of Rockridge and Temescal would have been destroyed.

Many people also falsely rely on the idea that "firebreaks" will keep the fire from spreading. We now have ample evidence that large fires generate their own weather, and that includes their own winds. It is difficult to imagine a larger and wider firebreak than Hwy 24 below the Caldecott tunnels, but wildfire-generated winds easily lofted flaming twigs, embers and small branches of eucalyptus (a particularly flammable non-native tree along with its cousins the acacias) from the northern side into upper Rockridge and Montclair on the south side. At the top of Birch Court, one block from College Avenue, burning eucalyptus debris landed in our garden and driveway for days. In point of fact, ash from the fire rained down on San Francisco.

The winds were so intense and the area was so dry that within an hour close to 800 buildings were on fire. The wind then blew southwest, pushing the fire toward San Francisco Bay. In some places, the temperature reached 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, making it virtually impossible to fight the fire effectively.

Homeowners attempted to hose down their roofs, but were often thwarted when water pipes burst from the fire. Also, many homes had wooden shingle roofs that were particularly susceptible to fire — it took only 10 minutes in some cases for a house to be brought down by the flames (see https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/fire-sweeps-through-oakland-hills).

Fire-hardening of structures is another comforting myth — once an urban wildfire takes hold, very little can stop it. Current State building codes on the subject, often a decade or more old, are proving inadequate in the face of the fires we have seen in the past 4 to 5 years. Whole towns and entire sections of cities have burned to the ground.

After the 1991 firestorm, the few surviving houses stood like lonely sentinels dotting the blackened landscape here and there, few and far between, and their survival was usually a matter of sheer luck.

In my life, nothing has compared to the sheer terror and trauma of the Firestorm. Nothing. The reality that you may lose your home to fire is frightening, and today, it is very real. Be prepared. ■

Firestorm Memorial Picnic at Lake Temescal

by Sarah Kidder

October 20 marks the 30th anniversary of the hills 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 we lost in the fires. Fire safety preparedness groups will also be on hand. For more info, visit northhillscommunity.org. ■



The Blue Water Barrels

by Rachel Hollowgrass

Slosh, slosh, slosh! "That's great! Do it again!" My wife pushed the blue barrel back and forth, to get the diluted bleach to wash over all of the inside surfaces.

It had been five years since we filled our twin 55-gallon barrels with potable water, kept in reserve for earthquakes and other emergencies. But once the recommended time limit for storing water has passed, what comes next? Get new barrels, refill the old ones, or something else? I started talking with neighbors and looked around for other information.

The neighbors came through. One had an electric pump, modified perfectly for draining a water barrel. Another shared tips, and together we found a good recommendation on the web: Refilling Water Containers Safely

Simplified steps
1. Drain
2. Inspect
3. Disinfect
4. Refill

Even with an electric pump, step 1, draining, took about 25 minutes for each barrel. With a hose attached to the pump, we were able to water our parched garden. A few days later, I helped neighbors do the same with their barrels and garden. We did steps two, three and four on our own, which took each of us about two hours.

After five years, the inside of each barrel remained pristine. The water treatment had done its job well. I would happily drink water from either barrel. The process was fun, and it felt good to do something constructive together. Now the twin barrels are back on their perch in the earthquake shed.

Having a plan is important, but it's easy to get overwhelmed by the many possible and recommended tasks for emergency preparedness. By doing one thing, I felt better. I could even imagine doing another.

If you have concerns about earthquakes, fires, or other emergencies, pick one simple thing and do it. We'll all be better off if we are each a bit more prepared. ■

MORE RESOURCES

Alameda County alerts
https://www.acgov.org/emergencysite/

Oakland Emergency Preparedness and Response Guides
https://www.oaklandcpandr.org/guides/

Oakland CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)
https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/oaklandcert

U.S. CERT
https://www.ready.gov/cert

CDC: Creating and Storing an Emergency Water Supply
https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/creating-storing-emergency-water-supply.html

Fresh Water Pump: Specs
https://www.pentair.com/en-us/products/residential/water-supply-disposal/recreational-vehicle/shurflo-slv-fresh-water-pump.html

Fresh Water Pump: Purchase
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Library, from front page

library served the community for 63 years.

The library closed in September 1987 because the building needed extensive structural repairs, and the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) acted quickly to form a Library Committee — first to find a temporary site for what was then the second busiest library in Oakland, and then to find a new permanent home.

With cooperation from OUSD, the Director of Libraries, the Oakland City Manager's Office, the Department of Public Works and then-Councilperson **Marge Gibson-Haskell**, a double-wide portable was placed on the grounds of Claremont Middle School at the corner of College and Birch Court. In these temporary accommodations, the already small library (1,731 square feet) became even smaller, just 1,400 square feet, with only 1,000 square feet accessible to the public.

Around that time, the Windmuller house at the corner of Manila and College and the adjacent storefront came on the market and was purchased by the City. The neighboring vacant lot, once occupied by the Longo Art Stone and Pottery Works, a manufacturer of ornamental concrete fixtures such as bird baths, statues and fountains (some of these are still seen around the neighborhood), also came up for sale. Although outbid at first, the City ultimately succeeded in acquiring the properties through a combination of eminent domain and purchase with the Merchant Off-Street Parking Fund (which is why the parking at the library is metered).

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Photo: Don Kinkead

Nancy Dutcher, with granddaughter Sophie Wurm, trying out the new Storyteller's chair in the children's wing at the library's grand opening in August 1996.

Money was still needed for construction of the new branch library as well as other enhancements, and Rockridge residents were intensively polled and surveyed through *The Rockridge News* to determine priorities for the new facility.

The lobbying and fundraising needs of the library project called for a separate institutional structure. Neighbors for a Rockridge Library, led by Nancy Dutcher, was formed, and became the official fundraising and advocacy group, with RCPC acting as fiscal agent. In cooperation with the College Avenue Merchants Association (CAMA), the Neighbors proposed to form a Mello-Roos special assessment district, to levy an annual fee on each residential parcel within designated boundaries in Rockridge.

Volunteers hand-addressed 6,000 letters to residents of the greater Rockridge area, asking if they would consider an increase in their property taxes to fund the local library. Signs were printed and thousands of phone calls made to educate the public on the benefits of the library. Measure L appeared on the ballot in November 1990, and 81.6 percent of voters approved a $25 per year parcel tax for 30 years — far surpassing the required legal threshold of a two-thirds vote.

In October 1991, shortly after the Oakland Hills Firestorm, residents bused to Sacramento for a little "Christmas library shopping." Wearing Rockridge Library badges sporting colorful flames, they lobbied the State Library Committee for funding. Only 12 applicants out of 48 were approved, and Rockridge was one of them, receiving $2.4 million.

Over the next four years, community involvement determined the footprint of the new facility. Rockridge residents were involved in every step of the process, and Rockridge's reputation as an "urban village" was solidified. Every conceivable effort was made to raise money for important equipment, and $140,000 was raised to buy books.

They selected architects and chose color schemes, furnishings, books, art and equipment. At the request of the community, a large meeting space that could be divided into two meeting rooms and a dedicated children's wing were mandated. Unlike many other libraries, Rockridge is designed to allow the community space to remain open while the rest of the library stays securely locked up, allowing for after-hours gatherings.

Construction began at the groundbreaking on February 11, 1995, and the doors officially opened on August 3, 1996, with a well-attended Grand Opening and Dedication Ceremony that included Mayor Elihu Harris, California State Librarian Kevin Starr and City Library administrators.

The diligence and perseverance of all those involved cannot be overstated. Over 100 volunteers put in thousands of hours over a total of 11 years before the doors opened. The willingness of the community to come together and offer their time, energy and money, plus the leadership of RCPC and a handful of very dedicated individuals created something that will continue to serve Oakland and our community long into the future. ■

RN ClassifiedAds

List your 36-word message here for only $22 (phone number counts as one word). Make check payable to RCPC, and write "Rockridge News Classified Ad" in the memo line.

Mail to: RCPC, 4900 Shattuck Ave., PO Box 22504, Oakland, 94609-20131.

The deadline for the November 2021 issue is October 21 (available on Nov 6). For more details, email Susan Montauk at smontauk@gmail.com.

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