THE Rockridge News

www.rockridge.org

VOL 39 • NO. 1 • ISSUE NO. 415 • JANUARY 2024 CIRCULATION: 6,300 RESIDENCES; 200 BUSINESSES

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

Surviving and Thriving: College Avenue Businesses Persevere Across the Decades

by Anna L. Marks

Rockridge businesses face many challenges. Crime, in particular, has created financial obstacles for many who bootstrap their way to success. We are grateful to these entreprenuers who, despite the challenges, continue to add joy and value to our community.

60-Year Anniversary

Eddie's Liquors / 5491 College

David Shrestha (photo on right) purchased Eddie's last April with his two cousins, **Sachin** and **Brad**, all of whom are from Nepal. They spent seven years working in the beer industry before starting their own business.

The previous owner purchased the shop in 1964 from the original Ed, Ed Silva, who, it is rumored, bought, but never opened the store due to financial problems — but the name stuck.

The cousins own two other stores, one in Berkeley and one in Richmond. Despite the limited space, Shrestha says he is open to product recommendations and wants to make it the most convenient shopping experience possible. He loves the '80s style and has no plans to change the overall aesthetics, but says they may remodel the inside next year. "A lot of customers have come in for 30 years, 40 years, which is awesome, and I love it."



Anniversaries, see page 3

VOTE 2024

Board Elections for Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC)

Rockridge

Learn more about RCPC @ Rockridge.org

Interested in serving your neighborhood?
6 seats are up for election

Deadline:
Prospective candidates must send an email to Chair@Rockridge.org by February 28, 2024 at 5pm

Who can vote?
Anyone 18 years or older, whose principal residence is within the RCPC boundaries (see Rockridge.org)

When is the Election?
Thurs. April 18 & Sat. April 20
More details to follow in the Rockridge News

Discover a New World of Apple Ciders — Hard and Alcohol-Free

by Susie Wyshak



Liv Maki and Mike Reis discovered Redfield apples are great for making cider.

Five years after opening at 5815 College Avenue, Redfield Cider has gone from a dream to a popular Rockridge establishment. The bar and bottle shop now offers up to 150 cider varieties, including popular non-alcoholic options, along with 70 natural wines and small-batch beers.

Redfield Cider, see next page

Redfield Cider, from front page

The name Redfield comes from a variety of tart, hybrid apples that are not great for eating, but, as owners **Mike Reis** and **Liv Maki** discovered, the fruit makes for a wonderful glass of cider. Intrigued? Bring your cider queries and friends to **Redfield's anniversary party on January 27,** where Reis and Maki will share their extensive knowledge about flavor profiles, the history of Bay Area cider, and the national trends in consumption that has taken place since Angry Orchard first introduced cider to mainstream America back in the 2000s.

Maki and Reis met at 18 Reasons, a community-focused nonprofit culinary school in San Francisco that hosts hands-on cooking classes. They began dating, and as the bug to start a business hit, their complementary skillsets seemed perfect for launching some sort of bar. Reis had managed sales and beer programs with Lagunitas, Monk's Kettle, and The Abbot's Cellar. Maki had a passion for the food industry with extensive experience under her belt.

They agreed that beer was well-established, and cider was starting to trend. The Berkeley residents envisioned Redfield as a cozy, dark spot for date nights, "rubbing up against your neighbor's shoulders," and landed in Rockridge.

Then Came the Pandemic

The business managed to evolve and thrive during Covid by serving cider to customers in their breezy outdoor parklet, and their Monthly Cider Clubs and Wine Clubs continue to expand… members can now enjoy free tastings of club selections at Redfield, as well as through gift memberships.

Ciders, Wines, and Hearty Bites

Everything Redfield offers comes from its mission to provide a healthy, sustainable, adult beverage. They only stock ciders that are flavored with real fruits such as guava and passion fruit — without extracts or concentrates that are often found in flavored ciders today. What's natural? Bio-dynamic farming. Minimal inputs. Natural fermentation.

The rising popularity of cider has led more small Bay Area wine producers to add ciders to their roster. "The lines between cider and wine continue to blur," Reis explains. Richmond's Purity Wine, Buddy Buddy of San Francisco, and North American Press are just a few wineries bringing apples into their wine fold. "We're starting to see more and more interesting producers pop up."

Redfield's food menu spans a range of house-made treats that the duo prefer while drinking, to more hearty fare such as empañadas from Javi's Cooking on Market at 35th.

De-Alcoholized Ciders

For those abstaining from alcohol, Redfield features effervescent juices made from French cider apples, and they've been a huge hit. "These apples are more earthy and tannic than fresh supermarket apples," says Reis.

Most popular has been Windsor-based Tilted Shed's "Ellie's" made by fermenting apples using the traditional process. According to Reis, alcohol is removed with a vacuum distillation process at low temperatures to preserve the subtle flavors. They welcome visitors to discover the best blend for their palate.

Redfield hosts private and corporate events in its buzzy space. Contact them by email info@redfieldcider.com or give them a call at (510) 250-9058. ■

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CORRECTION:

Our apologies to **Lesley Evers** whose name was mistakenly mispelled in our December 2023 newsletter. See page 6 to read about her recent store expansion.

The Rockridge News

The Rockridge News was founded in 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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Contacting the *Rockidge News*

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? We'd love to hear from you.

Want to write a letter to the Editor? Lletters are limited to 450 words and are published at the editors discretion. Send letters to: editor@rockridge.org. Please be sure to include your name, email address, city and street of residence. **All submissions accepted for publication are subject to editing for clarity and brevity.**

The Rockridge News reserves the right to refuse any articles, letters, or advertisements.

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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.

Mail payment to: **RCPC,** 4900 Shattuck Avenue, PO Box 22504, Oakland, CA, 94609

Display Ad Deadline for FEBRUARY 2024: January 18th, 2023

Advertising rates are $28/column inch. Six-month pre-pay rates available. For display ads, call Jo Ellis at 510-653-3210 (**after noon**), or email **joellis1@hotmail.com**.

Classifieds: Email Susan at **smontauk@gmail.com**.

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.*

Anniversaries, from front page

45-Year Anniversary



Ver Brugge / 6321 College

Jerry Ver Brugge's father owned a butcher shop in San Francisco from 1947 to 1982, where Jerry first learned the trade. At the age of 39, he moved to the East Bay to open his own store in Rockridge because he thought "it would be an up and coming neighborhood." Now retired at age 85, the store is managed by **Ernesto** (not pictured), who has been with Ver Brugge for the last ten years. Jerry wants his neighbors to know that "We still have the same fine quality and the same friendly service, and we just want to carry on."

40-Year Anniversary



Muraski's Fine Futon Shop / 6050 College

Muraski's opened its door to the public in early 1984. The store specializes in 100 percent handcrafted bedding made in traditional Japanese and modern western styles. During the '80s, the Japanese healthy, therapeutic, and eco-friendly bedding was hard to find, and owner **Ed Muraski** was eager to introduce these styles to the U.S. He has a workshop in town where he makes the futons in the traditional way. "More than 90 percent of my customers are regulars. People love the quality and the prices."

His van has been broken into several times, but Muraski keeps a positive attitude. "Though we are experiencing some dark times, don't be scared away by those crooks. Come out to dine, shop and operate your business. Together we can fight through this."

20-Year Anniversary



CHIC / 5414 College

Rana Mazandarani, owner of Chic, is a microbiologist and UC Davis graduate, but her first love is art on textiles. After six years of study and eight years working in her field, Rana and her husband Behrouz, a UC Berkeley graduate, began their travels around the world. Travel inspires her, and she always returns with stylish, durable, one-of-a-kind garments — for men and women.

She started her business with Nancy Owens (founder of the Freight & Salvage) and maintains a varied, dedicated clientele, some of whom she has known from the start. "This store is about establishing good friendships.

Anniversaries, see next page

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Avenue Shops, from previous page

I love the community here, they are well traveled and family-oriented. It would have been impossible to survive without them, especially during Covid" (when she decided to open by appointment only). "I am at the point now where people know me, and I look forward to 20 more years."

10-Year Anniversaries

A16 / 5256 College

Lauren Davis, A16 manager for the last two years, has lived in the East Bay her entire life. She grew up in Berkeley and remembers coming to College Avenue as a child. She loves the "hustle and bustle" and community feel, yet says this establishment is much more laid back than their flagship restaurant in San Francisco. "We focus on Southern Italian. Shelley (owner, **Shelley Lindgren**) just released her book in August, *Italian Wine*. It's fun." During the holiday seasons, they offer a "Feast of Seven Dishes," so plan early for next year.

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Cole Hardware / 6255 College



Kelly McDonald is a friendly, dedicated cashier. She began working at Cole when it first opened, thinking she would work part-time… and she's still there. She loves the short commute from her home on Locksley. Her husband teaches at Oakland Tech, and their two sons went to all three local schools. As a result, she has come to know many of the folks in the neighborhood. She works hard to remember people's names, and does for the most part, but keeps notes in case she forgets. She is proud of the fact that the store is always open.

"During Covid we stayed open every day… holidays, Christmas, New Year's — we are here for the neighborhood. If there is something you want and we don't carry it, there is a good chance we can get it, just let us know."

See's Candies / 5802 College



Manager **Laura Bacina** has worked the College Avenue See's location since it opened ten years ago. She has been with the company for 22 years, and says they are planning something special to celebrate the anniversary.

"I love it, its my favorite location of all the ones I've worked at. I love the atmosphere here and all the great businesses around." Bacina likes to grab a pizza at Zachary's on her lunch break, or stop by Trader Joe's for last-minute shopping before going home. "Our business is still growing because a lot of people still don't know we're here."



5-Year Anniversary

Boichik / 3170 College

Emily Winston, owner of Boichik, celebrates her fifth anniversary with the opening of new stores around the Bay — Larkspur, Palo Alto, and Santa Clara — and says San Francisco will be next. She is proud to announce the growing availability of their frozen six-packs to supermarkets and cafes.

"We will be working on growing this distribution up and down the West Coast in the coming year," says Winston. "It has been quite a ride. Things are going really well and moving fast, but I can be found on College Avenue sometimes because I still live upstairs." ■

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DEAR EDITOR: I write in response to Stuart Flashman's letter to the editor, published in the December 2023 issue of the Rockridge News. Mr. Flashman writes in reference to the recent notice of cancellation of his homeowner's insurance and speculates that the regrettable cancellation of his insurance policy is somehow related to recent City of Oakland and State initiatives to encourage the production of more housing through higher density limits around the City and the State.

A September 14, 2023 article in *Cal Matters* reports the actual reasons behind Mr. Flashman's insurance cancellation: "Wildfires fueled a looming crisis in California's insurance market for years. After disastrous fire seasons in 2017 and 2018 wiped out decades of profit, insurance companies began dropping tens of thousands of customers by refusing to renew their policies." Alas, wildfires — not wild housing policy — are the culprit.

I suggest we stick to easily researchable facts and not wild leaps of logic in our correspondence. As far as I know, the densest neighborhoods in San Francisco, Chicago, and New York are not losing insurance coverage more quickly than other places.

Ken Rich
Manila Avenue ■

Land Use Committee Meeting

The Rockridge community is encouraged to participate in LUC meetings where elements of the General Plan Update will be a primary topic of conversation.

The next meeting will be held on January 17, 2024, on Zoom

Meetings are now being held at 7:30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month.

To participate, or to request links to this or any previous meeting, email landuse@rockridge.org.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DEAR EDITOR: Stu Flashman was not the only homeowner's insurance policy non-renewed for what appears to be a bogus reason (see December 2023 *Rockridge News*). And it appears that the California Department of Insurance is giving a free pass to insurance companies to do it.

I had an Allstate homeowner's policy for 31 years and never made a claim. Allstate refused to renew my policy due to the ivy growing on the front of my house. Supposedly, this is a fire hazard. The ivy has been on my house since Allstate first insured me and the company never complained about it previously. Well-watered ivy is considered a fire-resistant plant.

I complained to the California Department of Insurance, which determined that they were "…unable to conclude that your insurance company's non-renewal of your policy violated the California Insurance Code." I asked them to provide the legal basis for this decision, based on approved filings by Allstate. They came up with a filing reference from 2022. However, I could not find anything in that filing which justified Allstate's change in their renewal policy re: ivy (vegetation) on a house. I asked for clarification from the State but none came. I also asked Allstate to cite the specific document(s) and text in that filing which allowed them to non-renew my policy. No response.

I believe that the regulatory process was broken by Allstate and by the Department of Insurance. The correspondence from these parties backs up my conclusion that the non-renewal was not justified under any approved filing by Allstate. It appears to me that there was actually no legal basis for Allstate to non-renew my policy and that the Calif. Department of Insurance should have told them not to do it. This is another example of Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara enabling insurance companies at the expense of the public.

Jon Gabel
Ocean View Drive ■

January Events at the Rockridge Library

5366 College Ave.
at Manila
510-597-5017

For Children:

Storytime Thursdays and Saturdays; 10:30am.

Chess Club: Wednesdays at 4pm. No Chess 1/3. All ages and skill-levels welcome.

Read to a Dog: Thursdays at 4pm. Coco & Scout alternate weeks. They are trained to listen to young people practice reading aloud.

Intergenerational Origami: First Tuesday at 4pm, Third Tuesday at 6:30pm. All ages and skill-levels welcome.

Winter Bingo: Prize books for kids ages 0 to 13 who complete 5 or more BINGO activities: through 1/27/2024.

For Teens

Jeopardy and Snacks: Wednesday, 1/10 2-3pm. Presented by the Teen Advisory Board with the support of the Friends of the Rockridge Library.

Teen Advisory Board: Wednesday, 1/10; 3:30pm-4:30pm. Join the Rockridge Branch Library Teen Advisory Board (TAB) and take an active role in creating, planning, and implementing programs and services you want to see at your local library. Every 2nd Wednesday in the TeenZone. New members welcome.

For Adults

Rockridge Book Club every 2nd Saturday. Please call (510) 597-5017 for more info and to get a copy of the book. January's book is Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro

NOTE: The library will be closed Monday, January 15 in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Hours:
Mon, Thurs, Sat 10am to 5:30pm
Tuesday and Wednesday - 10am to 8pm
Closed on Sundays

Please also check the online calendar at: www.oaklandlibrary.org/events.

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NCPC Holds Meeting on Crime with District Attorney Pamela Price

by Carol Kasparek

District Attorney **Pamela Price** attended the general meeting of the Greater Rockridge Crime Prevention Council, held at the Rockridge Library on December 14, 2023. She was joined by Captain Lisa Ausmus, the new Oakland Police Department (OPD) district supervisor for our area. Attendance was light; about a dozen showed up in person with another 17 attending via Zoom (see the website at https://www.rockridgencpc.com/ for transcripts and video recordings).

Captain Ausmus has had this assignment for seven months. She cited statistics showing increased home break-ins for both beats 12y and 13x and an increase in vehicle thefts for 12y, and noted that collecting and interpreting data is difficult when each beat reports data differently. The department is working to set standards to more effectively present evidence to the DA.



Photo by Carol Kasparek

District Attorney Pamela Price speaks at the Greater Rockrdge Crime Prevention Council meeting.

DA Price began her presentation by stating she was the first "non-appointed, non-anointed" person to hold the office. She has focused on "cleaning up the mess" she found when she took office. She explained that without formulas for submission and analysis, "We do not have data transparency." She tasked her team with providing reliable data for reliable analysis and says that without better systems, current performance of her office should not be compared to the past.

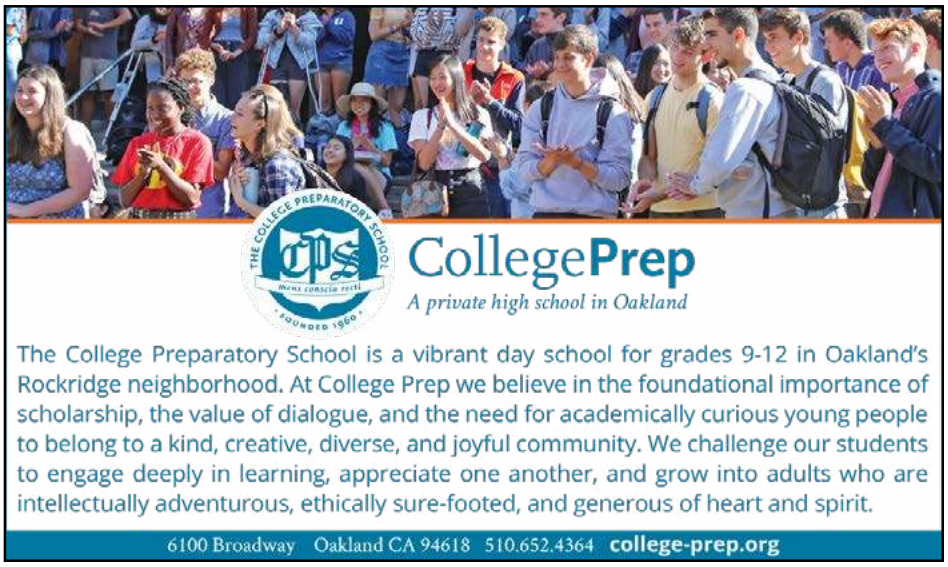
Attendees expressed concerns about the lack of consequences for those who do get arrested. Price countered that the arrests themselves have been shown to be good deterrents. She explained that probation is favored by the department for a number of reasons, including the fact that State law makes pursuing charges for serious crimes difficult, and building cases for these types of charges require resources that OPD does not have.

According to Price, successful crime prevention strategies requires providing offenders with housing, employment, and mentorship. With this in mind, she set up new positions and offices to focus on mentorship for young people and improving parole conditions. She also created the Community Support Bureau, encompassing the Family Justice Center and the Cares Navigation Center, to further her prevention strategy.

As far as the recall effort, Price sees it as "undemocratic at heart" and has expanded a speaker's bureau to explain what her office is doing and to answer questions. "I had no idea there would be such a dramatic interest in my office," she said. She let the group know that two new appointees are engaging with local communities — **Esther Lemus** and **Austin Bruckner**; both can be reached at acgov.org.

With a great new team of Assistant District Attorneys, Price said, "We are working overtime for citizens of the county. We cannot go back, we have to go forward." ■





Get Ready to "Ride for A Reason" — The Annual Fundraiser for Public Schools

by Cliff Rechtschaffen



Parents, students, teachers, and community members will ride from Oakland Technical High School to the State Capitol in Sacramento on **April 20, 2024**, to support public education. The fundraiser, which began as a protest against the deep budget cuts to California public schools during the Great Recession, has grown to include hundreds of bike riders. More than $1.62 million has been raised for 12 public schools in Oakland and Alameda since the ride began in 2009.

Interested in participating? The time to start training is now. Riders can choose from fully-supported rides of distances of 45, 68, or 109 miles (for the shorter rides, cyclists take a bus to the starting point). New this year is a 9-mile kid-friendly ride — a beautiful loop ride starting at the State Capitol.

The event is staffed by close to 75 volunteers, and after expenses are covered, all proceeds go directly to schools. Funds are used for library books, sports equipment, after-school programs, science equipment, and salaries for counselors, librarians, and reading specialists. Local beneficiaries include Emerson Elementary, Claremont Middle, and Oakland Tech and Oakland International High Schools.

For more information or to sign up, please visit: https://rideforareason.weebly.com. If you have questions or would like to volunteer, please email Nora Vargas-Dye at R4RSchools1@gmail.com. ■



Virgil is not just any ordinary dog, he's a four-legged superstar who deserves all the attention he can get. Named after the famous poet, Virgil is a true Renaissance dog who has a knack for playing frisbee like a pro, indulging in ice cream like a true connoisseur, and making new canine companions at the dog park (he has a discerning nose for sniffing out new friends to share his frisbee). He's paws-down one of the most playful and lovable dogs in our neighborhood.



Teddy is a three-year-old red toy poodle. He is the light of our lives and always keeps us on our toes. He loves daily walks around Rockridge (he's a big fan of Boyd Avenue), a visit to Cole Hardware, or a treat from the postal lady. Teddy has the air of a refined French gentleman and is no stranger to turning up his nose at his dinner or taking up all the space on the sofa. He tends to get into hijinks frequently — from getting tangled in Mom's knitting, to eating a wheel of Brie cheese, to daily scuffles with his arch nemesis, the Squirrel.

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Leveling the Playing Field on College Admissions

eyes on Rockridge

by Judith Doner Berne

"It's all about fit," **Sally Springer**, said, referring to the process of identifying schools that are good matches for college-bound students.

Springer, who moved to Rockridge two years ago, is the driving force behind *Admission Matters*, a guidebook to "*What Students and Parents Need to Know About Getting into College*," now in its fifth edition. Written with three other authors who each bring different perspectives, the book is dedicated to "our children and grandchildren."

"It's been a labor of love," she said of the book she began writing when her son **Erik Hop** was a junior in high school. "He wasn't that interested in doing the research," she said, "so I just decided to learn all I could." After reading what was out there for students and their parents, she found "some were out of date, some were wrong, and some were cynical."

"I decided to write the book I and my son would want to read," Springer said. It was first published in 2005 when Hop was at Stanford. The next year, daughter **Mollie** matriculated at Scripps College, part of The Claremont Colleges.

She also wanted "to help level the playing field. For the price of a book students can get information that you would have to pay someone for — and high school counselors are stretched so thin." And whether using a private or school counselor, she said, students can ask better questions. "The book is multilevel. If you don't know anything, you can learn. If you know something, you can get the nuance."

The latest version, issued last fall, has received high praise from college admission directors and high school counselors and serves as a textbook for college advisor courses such as the UCLA Extension Certificate Program in College Counseling. What it covers includes: building a balanced college list; whether to take the SAT and/or ACT and submit scores; when to apply; steps toward crafting a compelling application; how colleges decide whom to admit; and the complexities of financial aid.

For Davis parent **Scott Carney**, "The resources in the book were a helpful reminder of how to find the great schools that not everyone is talking about. Understanding the financing and different types of financial awards also made a difference. For our kids, the book offered some real perspective that it is not all about them, and many factors influence admissions."

Springer is frank about the challenges of writing a book on college admissions while so much is in flux. Topics that will play a significant role in the future (noted in the book without detail) include AI and how admissions offices will adapt to its use; how colleges will diversify their student bodies in the wake of the June Supreme Court ruling banning affirmative action; and the experiment with the "flipped" model of college admissions in which students receive admission offers without first completing applications.

The authors will update these and other topics on an ongoing basis at www.admissionmatters.com as well as on the Admission Matters Facebook page and X account. Information specifically directed to LGBTQ students is

Eyes on Rockridge, see next page

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Market talk: General inflation rate is down to near 3%, so FEDs are likely reversing course and will hold and or reduce short term rates in coming months. Long term mortgage rates came down about 1% in the last 2 months averaging about 6.875% now. A 1% reduction in rates can mean $100K more in buying power for a Buyer so great time to get in before the spring surge!

Coming soon:
-Gorgeous 2200sf 5978Margarido.com Rockridge view home will re-emerge late January. $2,095,000
-3+ Bedroom 2 Bath 1900sf restoration project off Piedmont Ave Neighborhood. $ TBD
-4 continguous view lots in Piedmont Pines, great for 4 homes or a dream estate. $ TBD

January is Awareness Month for: Blood donors (Red Cross on College @ Kales), Mental Wellness, Poverty, Veganuary, Walk Dogs, CBD, Hobbies, Hot Tea, Soup, Food Servers, Learn to Ski/Snowboard!



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COMPASS

Eyes on Rockridge, from previous page

also not included in the book, but they plan to address that on the website as well in any future editions of the book. Springer also co-authored *Left Brain, Right Brain* which was honored by the American Psychological Foundation for contributing to the public's understanding of psychology. It's been translated into seven languages and has appeared in five editions. Her second book, *How to Succeed in College*, is a guidebook for college freshmen.

"I wrote these books when I decided a book needed to be written," said Springer, who received her B.S. *summa cum laude* from Brooklyn College and her Ph.D. in psychology from Stanford. She drew on 25 years of experience as a professor and university administrator, retiring as Associate Chancellor Emerita from UC Davis in 2007.

That was also the year Springer started her college admission counseling service when a friend of her daughter asked for guidance. "I found that I very much enjoyed helping students find good educational matches" presented in the form of a college list to reflect their needs and wishes. She refers them to other professionals if they want help with college essays. "Sometimes I just see a family once; others I work with more closely."

Her move to Rockridge was driven by the fact that her son and his family, now including a first grandchild, had bid on a few houses here before finally



Sally Springer's book is now in its fifth edition.

settling in Elmwood. Before then, "I had never really heard of Rockridge. It was during the pandemic and this little house was just coming on the market. I thought why am I sitting in Davis in this big house? It just gets hotter and hotter."

"I'm thrilled to be here," Springer said. "I love it. I'm close to my children and grandchildren. You can get around without a car." She traveled between her two residences until the Davis house sold. "I considered my move official when I brought my cats." And for the first time since she was a child, she has a dog, Daisy, courtesy of the Contra Costa Animal Shelter — although her cats aren't quite as happy about it.

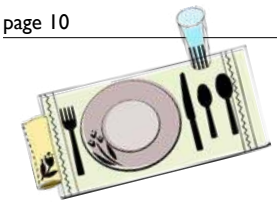
"We introduced ourselves before she moved in," said **Marilyn Citron**, who with her husband **Kevin Flynn** live next door. "Sally and I have a bit of shared history as we both earned our undergraduate degrees at Brooklyn College. Our neighborhood is extremely cohesive, with low turnover, and all of us welcomed Sally, who was immediately embraced by our neighbors at our block parties and events."

"Sally and I have been meeting for weekly walks through Rockridge for about a year now," said **Susan Putney**. "She is kind, caring, supportive, and super smart. I recommend Sally and her book to my friends with high schoolers," Putney said. "I wish all kids had someone like Sally for college guidance. It's definitely one of life's most important decisions."

To suggest ideas for Eyes on Rockridge, email judyberne@att.net. ■







The Invincible Drink: Ginger-Limeade Cocktail

Marica Restaurant
5301 College Ave

Marica Restaurant, named for a Roman water nymph, is now in its third decade serving its signature dishes, with main courses centered on seafood. To whet the diners' appetites, the menu presents an inviting list of cocktails. One of these, the Ginger-Limeade cocktail, has been a staple since Marica opened in 2000.

Within the world of cocktails, there is naturally a tension between invention and stability. But sometimes the one ripens into the other — the Ginger-Limeade cocktail being a case in point. The drink's durability will not surprise anyone who has tasted it. The ingredients are in perfect balance, with a good citrusy tartness; the result is both piquant and satisfying. **Nedda Cheung** (see photo), who owns and operates Marica with her husband **Christopher**, had the original inspiration for the cocktail and refined it with the help of their son Austin.



Much of the effort in preparing a Ginger-Limeade cocktail precedes the actual mixing of liquids. First, fresh ginger root has to be peeled and cut up. Then the ginger flesh is "muddled" (mashed) with a cocktail muddler (basically, a small pestle). Next, the preparer pours vodka — nowadays, always Tito's — over the ginger pulp and allows it to sit. Then the infusion is strained to remove any remnants of ginger pulp. At the end of the process, lime juice and unflavored syrup are stirred in. The concoction is served cold.

Since 2020, in the early pandemic, cocktails have been available to Marica's take-out customers in charming small mason jars, for enjoyment at home. Sealed up in this fashion, the Ginger-Limeade cocktail keeps nicely (and easily until tomorrow's cocktail hour).

New libations continue to flow forth. The latest addition to the cocktail list is the "Violet 75," a mixture of Bombay gin and prosecco infused with butterfly pea flowers. These indigo flowers were originally native to a single island in the East Indies, but are now more widely cultivated. In various Asian countries, dried pea flowers are combined with lemongrass to brew a kind of tea, served hot or cold with honey and lemon. Now, at Marica, they will appear in a new incarnation. ■

— Submitted by John Gussman

Send your favorite bite or beverage in Rockridge to editor@rockridge.org.

Expanding the Fabric of Community

by Anna Marks

Fashion designer **Lesley Evers** (see photo) opened her retail clothing shop by the same name on College Avenue in 2012, at the corner of Forest Street and Lawton. Although the shop was modest in size, an influx of natural light created an inviting, warm atmosphere.

Evers was inspired to open her store in Rockridge as a result of a long-held dream to broaden her brand. Having served 200 boutiques nationwide since 2008, she had plenty of surplus inventory on hand, so she and her husband took the leap to open their first brick-and-mortar location.

"The idea of having a physical space where we could directly interact with our customers and be an integral part of the community was incredibly exciting. It wasn't just about selling clothes; it was about creating a local hub for fashion lovers and becoming a part of the daily fabric of our neighborhood."

The shop has since relocated to 5709 College Avenue. Last month, they expanded the store's footprint by taking over the space next door that had been recently vacated by the home goods shop, Mignonne Decor, allowing her to showcase a much larger selection. "This expansion isn't just about having more space; it's about enhancing the way our customers engage with our products. It's a transformation from a crowded store to a delightful shopping sanctuary."

Evers' clothing line is a vibrant homage to the spirited, fun, active styles of the '60s and '70s, infused



with a modern twist. Eager to cater to those who adore wearing audacious prints, the store offers a range of garments that are not just clothes, but conversation starters. Evers has a newly designed array of artful pieces with playful patterns that are comfortable and stylish. "My goal is to create pieces that bring joy and add a splash of color to everyday life." ■

Somm Demand: A Fast-Track to Wine Appreciation

by Carol Kasparek

When you want to buy a bottle of wine, do you sometimes wish you could chat extensively with the waiter to help guide you through a voluminous wine list? Even better, how about if that person already knew what you liked? The founders of Somm Demand give you that better experience by providing the expertise of a sommelier or "somm" so that anyone can learn to overcome the mysteries around wine selection.

"I learned about wine from my best friend, **David Roby**," says co-founder **Nick James**. James grew up with Roby who went on to become a sommelier at several high-end restaurants in San Francisco. Their discussions and tastings were informal and often included the history and culture of wines. They loved the experience and thought about bringing this type of exposure to wine to others, wondering, "What if everyone had a wine buddy?"

During the height of the pandemic when no one was dining in restaurants, James and Roby tested the concept of a "sommelier on demand," focusing on Roby's knowledge. **Gianpaolo Paterlini**, the sommelier at Acquerello (a Northern Italian restaurant in San Francisco) joined the group, allowing them to more fully develop the concept of a deep and broad service provided by friendly experts. James, a data engineer, used his coding skills to build a platform to make their services easily accessible and instructive.



Nick James looks on as Gianpaolo Paterlini pours a glass for tasting.

Photo by Carol Kasparek

To begin the service (free for now), clients fill out an online form and then reserve a consultation with a somm who will ask questions and make suggestions, online or by phone. The company offers a variety of selections from their online inventory of wines that can be shipped, delivered, or picked up locally in Rockridge — by the case or by the bottle. Purchases are added to their profile so they can track what they like, or they can allow the somm to make recommendations.

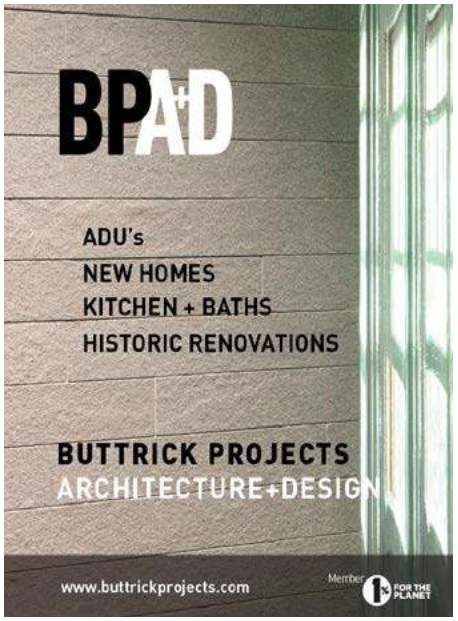
From the wine lover who wants to add to their cellar, to the person baffled in front of the wine wall at a supermarket, Somm Demand is there for you. "We want to make sure you're covered," says James, even if this means simply answering what might taste best with pork chops.

Recently, Somm Demand held a tasting at Planterday (a plant nursery at 6004 College) where Roby guided attendees through a series of wine tastings — from sparkling to deep reds. He asked each person questions to reveal their personal taste preferences. "Sensation is so important," says Roby, noting that "you need to use your nose to fully experience the wine."

To learn more, go to Somm Demand at https://www.sommdemand.com. ■







From Civic Good to Drag Shows, The RIC Has Served North Oakland for 112 Years

By Edward Guthmann

This East Bay Nosh story was first published, in slightly different form, by Oaklandside and Berkeleyside on June 23, 2023, and is reprinted here with permission. This is the first in a two-part series; the second part will run in next month's Rockridge News.

Seven years ago, **Scott Ayers** bought a bar in Rockridge. The joint was divey, dispirited. The clientele was dying off. The bar was called Ye Olde Hut, but for many decades prior it was simply known as The Hut. Guests entered through a Tudor-style façade that promised folksy comforts, only to find a dismal interior going to seed. An enormous brick fireplace, the stench of stale beer, and a few random barflies slumped like question marks on barstools.

"It was a sinking ship," said Ayers, a musician from Burlington, VT, who moved to Oakland in 1997 to make it in the music business. In the 2000s he fronted a band called the Lovemakers and went by the moniker Scott Blonde. When iTunes, Spotify, and other streaming services ate away at musicians' royalties in the early 2010s, Ayers proposed to his friend, record producer, and music lawyer **Jeff Saltzman**, that they buy a bar.

"Jeff was like, 'Well, if you find a bar, let's buy it.'" When Ayers approached the owners of Ye Olde Hut, "They were immediately ready to sell," he said.

Today, Ye Olde Hut is gone. The façade at 5515 College Avenue is the same, but the bar is now the Rockridge Improvement Club, or RIC for short. It's a tongue-in-cheek reference to the civic organization that built the structure in 1911 on a block that became the heart of the Rockridge commercial district.

The RIC opened in June 2016 with Ayers as manager and an almost nightly presence, and Saltzman as co-owner. Business was slow at first, and, in March 2000, the bar closed for a year due to Covid. Today, the RIC is a blooming success. There's a younger clientele, a variety of weekly events, and a congenial, informal vibe.

Ayers, 48, brought creativity and youthful enthusiasm to the job. He had a hunch that live entertainment would fly and slowly built a weekly schedule: a Skee-ball tournament every Tuesday, Trivia Night each Wednesday (Ayers writes the questions and also hosts), a drag show on Thursdays, karaoke on Fridays, and deejays and live bands on weekends.

"I just wanted to bring something to the neighborhood that's super-fun and different," he said. "A little bit weird. A little bit David Lynch. A little bit Roy Orbison. A little bit queer. And just throw it all in this one thing and mix it up and see what happens."

"Scott turned it around," said **Eric McNiel**, a products director at a marijuana dispensary, who deejays a reggae vinyl night at the RIC. "He and Jeff made it a fun spot — especially post-Covid."

RIC, see next page



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RIC owner Scott Ayers (left) and bartender Nathan Gale (right). Gale worked a ten-year stint at the Hudson Bay Cafe before mixing cocktails at the bar.

Founded in 1910, the Vernon-Rockridge Hall has always been a local gathering place.

Photo courtesy of the Oakland Public Library, Oakland History Center

RIC, from previous page

Drag was the initial entertainment offering — "which is funny considering they're two very straight rocker dudes," said **Ava LaShay**, who commutes from Livermore to host the show each week. "Scott and Jeff are so supportive. At our very first show, one of the bartenders came in drag to support us, which was really cute. They want us to feel safe there."

Stripping off the grit and muck that accrued during The Hut and Ye Olde Hut eras took two months. The bar's interior went from dank and dour to quirky and kitschy, with velvet paintings of cougars and unicorns, and two Christmas trees that stay up all year. Bob Ross's "The Joy of Painting," usually muted, plays on TV when there's not a sports game to watch.

Behind the bar, there's a glossy photo of a young Christopher Walken — seemingly the bar's patron saint or spirit animal. And, in the tiny storefront next door, where Open Mind Music used to be located, Ayers installed a game room/arcade.

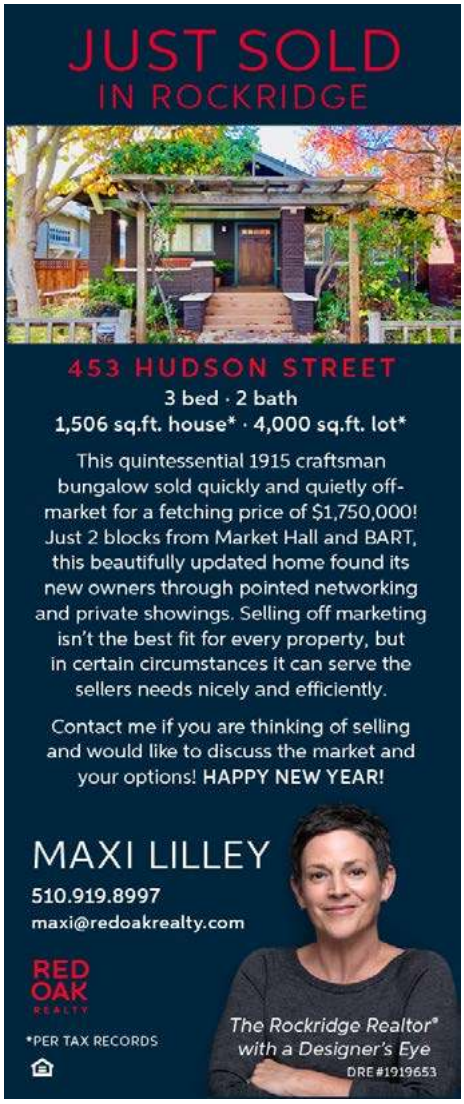
All those changes are paying off. The RIC is far more popular than the Ye Olde Hut was in its dying days. Ayers said that when the bar reopened in March 2021, after the pandemic shutdown, business went up by nearly 50 percent. Saltzman credits Ayers with that success: "Scott's just a super-friendly and super-nice guy. When he goes away, we don't do as well," he said.

Not everyone is thrilled with the RIC. Saltzman remembers that when the bar opened, he and Ayers got static for the new name, the irony of which escaped most people. "It seemed so snotty, you know? People were like, 'Oh, you think you're gonna improve Rockridge, huh?' "

SF Eater ran a piece lamenting the demise of another dive bar, and mischaracterized the RIC as "dedicated to craft cocktails." The Ye Olde Hut diehards perceived a stench of bourgeois, pinkie-finger-in-the-air elitism. "We actually had people shoot through the windows with BB guns and put bags of garbage in front of the door," said Saltzman.

Part Two will look back to the early history of the RIC and describe the massive changes that The Hut survived in the 1960s when hundreds of local homes and businesses were leveled and construction began on BART and Highway 24. ■





Meet the Authors in 2024 at the Rockridge Library

by Alona Rivord

The Rockridge branch of the Oakland Public Library is hosting local writers throughout 2024 as part of a "Meet the Author" series. Branch Manager **Brian Guenther** is organizing the talks, which will feature readings from new works and discussions with their authors.

"With this series and others in the works, I hope to confirm the Rockridge Library's reputation as a cultural centerpiece of the Oakland community, all while celebrating the accomplishments of our local authors," says Guenther.

The following talks will take place on Wednesdays in the upstairs meeting room at the Rockridge branch from 6:30pm-7:30pm. Additional author events will be announced on the events section of the Oakland Public Library website.

February 21, 2024

White Supremacy is All Around: Notes from a Black Disabled Woman in a White World — by **Dr. Akilah Cadet**

Dr. Cadet is the founder and CEO of Change Cadet, which prepares people and companies to be agents of change in the workforce. The book is the author's first collection of essays and addresses the actions needed to dismantle white supremacy.

March 20, 2024

Most Delicious Poison: The Story of Nature's Toxins, from Spices to Vices — by **Dr. Noah Whiteman**

Dr. Whiteman is Professor of Genetics, Genomics, Evolution and Development and Director of the Essig Museum of Entomology Research at UC-Berkeley. The book explores how nature's toxins evolved and why we use and abuse them.

May 1, 2024

When You Care: The Unexpected Magic of Caring for Others — by **Elissa Strauss**

Strauss is the Artistic Director of the Bay Area hub of LABA: A Laboratory for Jewish Culture and a journalist, essayist, and opinion writer. The book combines research about care with stories from parents and caregivers as a way to examine the role caring plays in society.

June 26, 2024

But You Look So Normal: Lost and Found in a Hearing World — by **Claudia Marseille**

Marseille is a full-time painter and former fine art portrait photographer. The book is a memoir chronicling the author's severe hearing loss, childhood, education, family relationships, and life journey.

"When seeking authors to invite to join the series, my primary conditions were that they reside in Oakland, and that their book be newly released and compelling enough to warrant a discussion. I'm proud that this group of authors reflects Oakland's diverse community and that each will be speaking on topics that are unique and provocative. Community members will come away from each event feeling inspired and intellectually stimulated," says Guenther.

The author series is co-sponsored by Friends of the Rockridge Library and A Great Good Place for Books, an independent bookstore in Montclair Village where copies of the featured book available for purchase and signing at each talk. The series is made possible in part thanks to generous donations to the Friends. Learn more at www.rockridgefriends.org. ■



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12/21/2022	2	1	5214 Boyd Ave	$875,000	$875,000	0	$875,000
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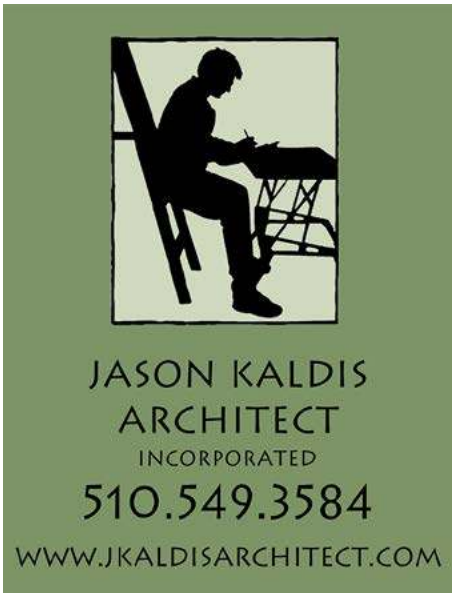
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The Greater Rockridge NCPC meets on the 2nd Thursday of even numbered months.

The next meeting will be held on:
February 8, at 7pm,
Rockridge Library Conference Room

There will be brief presentations by the Community Resource Officers and discussion of crime and safety issues.

For details, visit
www.rockridgencpc.com









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