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

**CANDIDATE FORUM TOWN HALL:**
**Alameda County Board of Supervisors – District 5**

**Co-hosted by:**
Oakland Technical High School's Varsity Debate Team

**Tuesday, February 13**
**6pm to 7:30pm**
**Oakland Tech Student Ctr.**

Access is through the main doors of the campus from Broadway

**To attend in person, or via Zoom, register at:**
**Bit.ly/D5CandidateForum**

## *Rockridge News* Goes COLOR

Notice something different? As of this month, we are printing the *Rockridge News* in color.

When recently faced with the need to change printers, we were presented with the opportunity to print in color at a great price — and our supporting advertisers stepped up to help make it happen. We can't thank them enough, and we encourage our readers to support them in return.

With their help, and the support of the many volunteers who bundle and distribute this newsletter every month, and you, our readers, this is truly a community effort.

Thank you all.

*— Anna L. Marks, editor*

# A Moment of Art, in a Trash Can

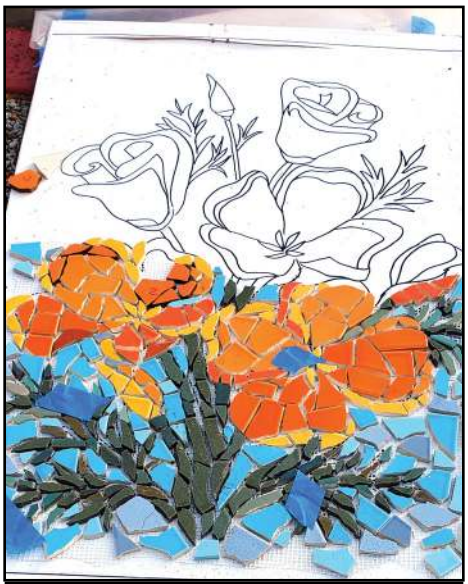
*by Carol Kasparek*

Last summer, the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) considered how best to advance their goal to enhance the neighborhood. Noticing that Temescal and other adjacent areas had begun encasing trash cans with mosaics, they chose to transform three cans; two located on busy corners of College Avenue, and one at Frog Park. Funds from the Rockridge Kitchen Tour were used to hire a mosaicist and pay for materials. **Eileen Fitz-Faulkner**, an artist with deep roots in the community, was recommended by RCPC Chair **Casey Farmer**, and the RCPC board agreed to move the project forward.

Fitz-Faulkner is very familiar with the streets and folks of Rockridge. A resident for many years, she was the main project leader for the "Big Build" that created the Frog Park greenway.



Artist Eileen Fitz-Faulkner works on the trash can at College and Miles (outside Ain't Normal Cafe).



Before installation of the artwork, tiles are cut and laid on netting over ink drawings.

While coordinating over a dozen volunteer committees, she discovered what the community wanted and found artistic ways to complement the environment.

"She was a wonderful leader with a good visual sense and attention to detail," observed Friends of the Rockridge Greenbelt (FROG) board member **Theresa Nelson**. "She made the parks artistic and cool." With mosaicist **Monique Zandi**, and cement contractor **Jimmy Peterson**, Fitz-Faulkner helped create and design the beloved Turtle and Bench in the park playground. She later repaired a "compass rose" in the park which needed to be changed from glass tile to more durable ceramics.

*Trash Cans, see next page*

*Trash Cans, from front page*

Fitz-Faulkner's work on the Big Build, which drew on her training at the California College of the Arts and professional experience in Industrial Design, gave her a clearer understanding of how to use materials for outdoor structures. With the completion of the park in 2001, Fitz-Faulkner took courses at the Mosaic Institute (no longer active) and at the Crucible. Now, she exhibits in galleries throughout Northern California. She credits **Nikki de Saint Phalle's** sculptures as a major inspiration for her outdoor pieces. Some observers — at least this author and her partner — feel that Gaudi's Park Guell may also have provided some creative spark.

Fitz-Faulkner was impressed with the park's focus on local flora and fauna as expressed by children and adults in its initial planning, and decided to represent that vision in her trash can designs. "I wanted to bring people a little sweet moment of nature," she explained.

*Trash Cans, see next page*

## VOTE 2024

### Board Elections for Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC)

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

## 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.

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

**The next meeting will be held on February 21, on Zoom**

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

**CORRECTION:**

Apologies to Ed Murasaki of Murasaki's Fine Futon Shop at 6050 College Avenue for misspelling his name in our January 2024 issue.

Be sure to visit him, and his puppy assistant, Mochi, the next time you need hand-crafted bedding in Japanese and modern styles.



Photo: Anna L. Marks


## The RockridgeNews

*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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Jo Ellis..... Assistant Editor & Ad Manager
Susan Montauk .....Business & Distribution Manager
Judith Doner Berne ..... Senior Contributing Writer

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For information: info@rockridge.org

**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.

**Newsletter Subscriptions**

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 MARCH 2024: February 15th, 2024**

Advertising rates are $28/column inch ($32 for color). 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.*



California Horse Chestnut and Tidy Tip flowers adorn the trash can at the corner of Hudson and College — in front of the Hudson Bay Cafe. (Below is the trashcan at Hardy Park) *Photos: Anna L. Marks*

***Trash Cans, from previous page***

The California red-legged frog, a redwood and Clarkia (annual blooming plants) adorn the can at the Hardy Park/Frog Creek cul-de-sac. A Monarch butterfly, California Horse Chestnut, and Tidy Tip flowers now grace the corner of Hudson and College. At the corner of Miles and College, facing the Rockridge BART station is a quail, California Live Oak, and California Poppy.



The mosaics were first designed in her home studio in Tacoma, where she now lives. Fitz-Faulkner often returns to the Bay Area for projects, classes, and to spend time with friends.

Her artwork was attached to nets that could be more easily transported to their final destination. Installation took place throughout a weekend in early December. Challenges included intermittent rain that at times slowed the drying of the grout, and contending with speeding traffic around the corners where she was working. Fortunately, Rockridge District Association manager, **Chris Jackson**, assisted with traffic control by providing orange cones to protect the work areas. At one point, Fitz-Faulkner had to drape the panels and can with plastic to wait out a downpour, and the all-too-helpful Waste Management unknowingly took her tarp.

RCPC and Fitz-Faulkner would like to expand the public artwork projects in Rockridge. The BART station and the pathway between the Big Frog Creek Park and Little Frog Creek Park are good candidates for future installations. "I didn't think about the effect of softening a trash can until this project," reflected Fitz-Faulkner. "Wonderful to be able to use an eyesore to create a moment of art." ■

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# March Primary Election's Ballot Measures

*by John Gussman*

In Oakland, referendum measures appearing on next month's primary election ballot include one statewide measure, two county measures, and one City measure.

**Statewide: Proposition 1**

The statewide measure, Proposition 1, was placed on the ballot by the Legislature. Proposition 1 would overhaul an earlier measure from 2004, the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), by focusing expenditures on treatment services and care for persons with substance use disorders and/or mental illness, and on "housing for those needing behavioral health services and continuing support for prevention and early intervention."

Prop 1 would partly redirect the proceeds of an existing income surtax, increasing the funds that flow to State (rather than local) mental health programs. The measure would also authorize the issuance of $6.4 billion in State general obligation bonds to provide additional funding for such services. Of the total, up to $4.4 billion could be used by the State and local governments to build mental health and drug or alcohol treatment facilities; and up to $2 billion would support local government programs to provide housing for persons suffering from mental health or substance abuse problems who would otherwise be homeless.

**Alameda County: Measures A & B**

These Alameda County measures would amend the county Charter. Measure A would shorten the notification period for civil service examinations. Measure B would rescind the County's rules for recall of elective and appointed officers, in favor of general State Law (which differs significantly and doesn't provide for recall of appointed officers).

**Oakland: Measure D**

This Oakland measure would raise the City's appropriations ceiling for the next four years, allowing the City to spend certain tax and other revenues which were duly authorized and collected, but which otherwise would exceed the "Gann Limit" adopted by California voters in 1979. ■

# *Rockridge News:* District Captain Route is Open

*by Susan Montauk*




**Volunteers bundle the newsletter for delivery every month.**

There are two openings for volunteers this month, including one for a District Captain to replace **Toni Ellis,** who had this route for decades. This job requires delivering bundles to four Block Captains in the Chabot Road area.

We also need a Block Captain for the 400 block of 60th Street to replace **Dorothy Owens** — thank you, Dorothy, we wish you all the best. Toni and Dorothy are both hoping that volunteers will replace them soon so their neighbors will continue to get the newsletter without interruption.

- **District Captain for Routes 02A, 02B, 02C, 02D: Manor Crest, Chabolyn, Chabot Crest, Roanoke**
- **Route 25A12: Deliver to 22 houses, 400-436 60th Street, and one block from Colby to Howell**

District Captains deliver bundles to Block Captains. Their box of bundles is delivered to their front porches by their Marshals the first weekend of each month (except August). We ask that they deliver the bundles to their Block Captains soon after receipt. Block Captains deliver house-to-house. To volunteer, call (510) 547-3855, or email Susan at smontauk@gmail.com. ■

# on College Avenue

## *Happy Hour Special: Mussels and Pommes Frites*

## À Côté

**5478 College Avenue**

Celebrate life with a friend or loved one over a delicious selection of seasonal Mediterranean-style small plates at this cozy and intimate restaurant. Don't miss their $45 happy-hour special that includes a big bowl of Washington State mussels, two glasses of excellent house wine (or beer) and a generous portion of Pommes Frites — great for dipping. The savory mussels are cooked in Pernod, an anise aperitif from France, and served straight from their wood oven. ■




**Happy Hour Special is available Tuesdays through Thursdays, from 5-7pm; best to call ahead for reservations.**

**— Submitted by Anna L. Marks**

# College Preparatory School Used Book Sale

*by Nancy Flynn*

The College Preparatory School's renowned used book sale comes early this year. Join fellow Bay Area book lovers on **Saturday, February 24 and Sunday, February 25,** to find out why this is a not-to-be-missed event. Thousands of gently-used books will be on sale for adults, teens, and children — including many recent and popular titles in excellent condition.

There will also be media, vinyl, puzzles, and a small selection of vintage/antique books that offer something special for book lovers of every age. Most books are priced between $1 and $3, with some priced slightly higher. There will be a bag sale on Sunday with $8 bags all day.

Sale hours are **Saturday, February 24, from 10am to 4pm and Sunday, February, 25, from 10am to 2pm**. The event will be held on campus, with ample free parking. The College Preparatory School, Buttner Auditorium, is located at 6100 Broadway.

*Contact Bookfair@college-prep.org with any questions.* ■

**Rockridge Community Planning Council**
**2023 Financial Statement**

| | |
|---|---|
| INCOME STATEMENT | |
| Income | |
| Contributions | $460.00 |
| Rockridge News | 43,374.00 |
| Merchandise | 160.00 |
| Interest Income | 132.75 |
| Total Income | $44,126.75 |
| Expenses | |
| Rockridge News | $42,761.09 |
| Contractors | 7,675.00 |
| Insurance, Permits, Sales Tax | 1,606.00 |
| Misc Admin & Program Expenses | 4,000.03 |
| Events | 1,455.60 |
| Total Expenses | $57,497.72 |
| Net Receipts (RCPC) | $(13,370.97) |
| BALANCE SHEET | |
| Assets | |
| RCPC Assets, Savings/Checking | $82,931.82 |
| Equity & Liability | |
| Legal Fund Reserve | 55,000.00 |
| Equity | 41,302.79 |
| Net Income | (13,370.97) |
| Net Equity & Liability | $82,931.82 |

# *Dogs of Rockridge*



**Poppy "the popstar" is a sweet, approachable two-year-old Australian Labradoodle who expects to be adored and petted by all humans. She loves to wrestle hourly with her feline companion, Goose, who loves it, and Leo, who mostly tolerates and ignores them both. She will hop up onto a very high bar-stool and land squarely on your lap… and give you a high five, or even a ten. You'll find her enjoying short, energetic bouts of zoomie's near the DMV.**



**Hashbrown is a 50-pound low-rider, adopted from the East Bay SPCA in 2018. He's 75 percent bully, 25 percent staffy — and 100 percent stubborn. He favors slow, sniffy walks through Frog Park, though his pace quickens in the direction of College Avenue with stops at Cole Hardware, the RIC, or Eddie's. A champion sleeper, Hashy dedicates 16 hours a day to his craft with regular breaks to find a new patch of sun, sweep the floors for a snack, or request a belly rub. He loves people, so please say hi when you see him.**

*Does your furry friend live in Rockridge? If so, send a photo of your four-legged companion with a short commentary to: editor@rockridge.org.*

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# First Time in 30 Years: District 5 County Supervisor Seat is Open

*by Casey Farmer, RCPC Chair*

**Supervisor Keith Carson** will be stepping down from the Board of Supervisors after 32 years on the job. Carson, whose district includes Rockridge, announced shortly after the candidate filing deadline that he would not seek reelection through an online statement, noting that "it was time for a new chapter with fresh ideas." Nine candidates filed to run for this powerful seat. All candidates have been invited to speak at **RCPC's Town Hall Candidate Forum on Tuesday, February 13 at 6pm at Oakland Technical High School.**

The Fifth Supervisorial District includes the cities of Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Piedmont, and a portion of Oakland including West Oakland, Downtown (not Chinatown), North Oakland, Crocker Highlands, Glenview, and Dimond.

**What does a County Supervisor do?**

- They vote on a $4.1 billion-dollar budget.
- They are responsible for the social safety net, including dozens of social service programs, direct services to our unhoused residents, the mental health system, foster care programs, and many other vital services.
- They oversee the public health system (which includes Highland Hospital).
- They oversee the elected Sheriff, by way of public policy and their budget.
- They hire and fire the County Administrator who manages 21 Departments and Agencies that employ 9,900 people countywide.

**When is the election?**

Residents will vote for County Supervisor in the March 5 primary election. Ballots will be mailed to registered voters in early February, along with the candidates' official statements. Ballots must be postmarked by March 5 or delivered to a County Ballot Box. Voters can opt to vote in person at the Registrar of Voters (more at www.acvote.org). If none of the nine candidates receives 50 percent of the vote, the top two candidates will move on to the November general election.

**Who is running for District 5 County Supervisor Seat? (In alphabetical order)**

**Ben Bartlett** (Berkeley Councilmember). He represents South Berkeley; he is an attorney and serves on California's Blockchain Working Group. *See ben2024.vote*

**Nikki Fortunato Bas** (Oakland Councilmember). She represents Lake Merritt, Chinatown, Crocker Highlands, and San Antonio neighborhoods on the Oakland City Council, and was the previous Director of East Bay Alliance for Sustainable Economy (EBASE). *See nikki4supervisor.com*

**John Bauters** (Emeryville Councilmember). He is a former disaster relief director and eviction defense attorney, who currently works on policy and finance on the issues of homelessness, criminal justice reform,

*Supervisor, see next page*

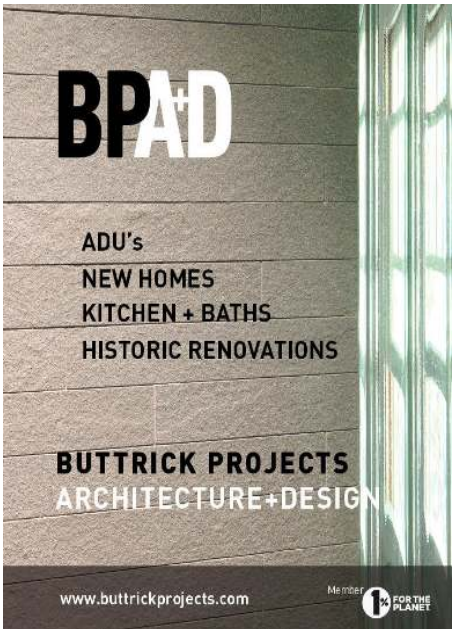
## RCPC TOWN HALL

**Rockridge Community Planning Council & Oakland Tech Varsity Debate Team**

**invite you to hear from the candidates, in person or online, at the**

**Please register here:**
**Bit.ly/D5CandidateForum**

**In addition, the League of Women Voters is hosting an online-only forum**
**Thursday, February 8, at 7pm**
**For details,** see lwvoakland.org









*Supervisor, from previous page*

and community-based mental health services. *See BautersForSupervisor.com*

**Ken Berrick** (Alameda County Board of Education Trustee). He founded Seneca Center, a nonprofit agency that serves children and families with comprehensive mental health, education, juvenile justice, foster care, and permanency services. He is a resident of North Oakland. *See berrickforsupervisor.com*

**Omar Farmer** (ALCO Veterans Affairs commissioner). He has also served on the City of Oakland's Public Safety and Services Oversight Commission.

**Greg Hodge** (nonprofit executive) He is a former OUSD Board Member and Director of the Brotherhood of Elders; his professional work focuses on facilitation and community engagement.
*See hodgeford5supervisor.com*

**Chris Moore** (community volunteer and accountant). He serves on the Board of the East Bay Rental Housing Association.

**Gerald Pechenuk** (member of the Alameda County Republican Party Central Committee).

**Lorrel Plimier** (attorney and data scientist). She is an Army veteran and has served on the Board of the League of Women Voters of Piedmont.
*See Lorrel4bos.com*

*Thank you for voting in the local elections; these matter greatly to our community.* ■

# Chabot Auction Time

*by Erin O'Hara*

New Year's may be over, but it's never too late to help "support public schools" as a feel-good resolution. The Chabot Auction is the PTA's big spring fundraiser, and starts on **Wednesday, February 21**.

Funds raised support enrichment education including art, music, and the library. They will also support student small-group reading and math specialists and equity and inclusion programming. This year, the PTA anticipates district-wide budget cuts, which makes the generosity of the community even more essential.

How can you help? Do you have a talent or trade like music instruction, sewing, or woodworking that you can offer for the auction? Do you have access to a vacation home or Airbnb to donate for a weekend getaway? It's donations like these that that make the auction special every year.

Are you a business owner who can donate a special item, gift card or service? Donating is a great way to promote your business, and your company's name will be highlighted as an official sponsor.

*Email inquiries and donation requests to auction@chabotelementary.org by February 15th.* ■








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# Foodie Photographer Focuses On Composition and Light

eyes on Rockridge

*by Judith Doner Berne*

If you read the *New York Times*, you might have seen your Rockridge neighbor **Aya Brackett's** photographs in its Food and Travel sections.

Brackett is an in-demand, freelance photographer, known for a style that is deliberately composed in an aesthetic that looks naturally lit — inspired by her appreciation for still life paintings. "I love using food to tell a story beyond the frame — storytelling through context."

"Where Aya excels most," according to *New York Times* food editor **Gabriel Sanchez**, "is in what I believe to be the most vital characteristic for any food photographer, which is an innate, almost obsessive reverence for beauty and craftsmanship that, when focused on a specific dish, can mean the difference between the iPhone pics we all take at dinner and the emotionally impactful photographs that Aya so expertly creates behind her lens."



Food photographer Aya Brackett composed her portrait, taken in their kitchen by her husband Corey Creasey.

Aya did the photography for **Mark Bittman's** *Dinner for Everyone*; for the cookbook *Bitter*, which won a 2015 James Beard Award, and regularly does photo shoots for *Bon Appetit* and *Dwell* magazines, among others. The photographs Brackett took for **Sasha Duerr's** book *Natural Color* were mainly shot in her Rockridge neighborhood.

But what has the food world buzzing right now is the cookbook *Rintaro: Japanese Food from an Izakaya in California*, written by Aya's brother, **Sylvan Mishima Brackett**, for which Aya did the photography. It was named as one of the *Times*'s Top 10 Cookbooks for 2023. Sylvan, who lives with his family just across the Rockridge border, is owner and chef of the Michelin Bib Gourmand restaurant, Rintaro, in San Francisco's Mission district.

The *Times* reviewer wrote: "Chef-driven cookbooks can often miss the mark of translating restaurant dishes for the home cook. Not here. Sylvan Mishima Brackett's first cookbook, *Rintaro* (Hardie Grant Publisher), honors and adapts Japanese traditions with a Californian state of mind…" Closer to home, Market Hall in Rockridge held a book signing in early November. Last month, **Alice Waters** gave a dinner to herald its publication. (Sylvan is among the many area

*Eyes on Rockridge, see next page*

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*Eyes on Rockridge, from previous page*

restaurateurs who began their careers at Chez Panisse.) He was just named a 2024 James Beard Award semifinalist for Outstanding Chef.

One of the perks of shooting for *Rintaro*, Aya said, was doing it at the restaurant rather than using a studio space. "He has his beautiful dishes and this beautiful restaurant." On the other hand, she noted, "It took a year and a half to photograph," as opposed to the usual few days in a studio situation.

So how did it happen that both she and her brother have food-centered careers? "I would credit my mother," she said, without hesitation. "She's a great cook. She made really wonderful dinners for us almost every night — Japanese and Italian. She always had cookbooks, and cooking and fashion magazines in the house. I thought I would be a fashion photographer for a short while."

This, despite growing up completely off grid outside of Nevada City as part of the "Back to the Land" movement of the late '60s and early '70s. "I grew up with two wood stoves, a generator for electricity, and a long dirt road." Her dad, **Len Brackett**, who died last year, met her Japanese mom in Kyoto where he spent five years learning Japanese temple carpentry. When he returned, he built Japanese-style homes mostly, but not all, in California, and were depicted in a book they did together. "He bought me my first Hasselblad camera, which I could never have afforded. That opened up the future for me," said Aya.

"Who she is, is a reflection of a special background," said **Alice Erb**, once her employer at the recently closed Tale of the Yak boutique, and her Rockridge neighbor. "I have many years of fondness for Aya. She's a very fine commercial photographer who brings a huge sensitivity and aesthetic to her work. I have a lot of respect for her."

"My parents always encouraged us to do things in the arts," Aya said. She took years of painting classes, but recalled, "I was into photography in high school and spent hours after school in the dark room." She enrolled at Brown University (graduating *magna cum laude*) partly because she could also take photography classes at the Rhode Island School of Design. She later studied photography at California College of the Arts.





**Examples of Aya's cookbook photos include pomegranates hanging from a tree in her Rockridge neighborhood** *(Bitter)* **and grapefruit jellies** *(Rintaro).*

Still, she thought she would work in arts administration rather than as an active artist. That changed during the four years she was a photo editor at *Dwell*, the modern architecture magazine. She saw people making a living by shooting magazine photos and thought: "I can do that."

Now, she has the freedom to say yes or no depending upon whether a project is interesting and has a reasonable budget. She also has been working on and off for the past ten years on her own book, photographing home cooks from around the world making comfort food. She wants readers to know their answers to: "Why did you choose this dish," and "What does it remind you of?"

Aya and her husband **Corey Creasey**, a director of short films, music videos, and commercials, moved to Rockridge in 2008. They relocated to the house next door in 2015 to have room for a home office, studio, and their growing family. The two work hard to balance the travel time they each need for their careers, as well as who will take and pick up (often by bike) nine-year-old Miya, from Peralta Elementary, and preschooler, Niko, age four.

"I love living in Rockridge," Aya said, "but I wish it were safer. What keeps us here is our neighbors," including two who were filling in for a babysitter who canceled that very night. "They are our extended family. They're 'aunties' and incredible people."

*Have local stories that need telling? Please send an email to: judyberne@att.net.* ■



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# Community Flips for Pancakes at Claremont

*by Diedre Poletiek*

The Rockridge community is invited to join Claremont Middle School (CMS) for the 13th annual Pancake Breakfast, hosted by the Masons at the Masonic Center on College Avenue on **Saturday, February 24**. The hearty menu will include a full breakfast of pancakes, eggs, sausage, bacon, fruit, coffee and tea. It's also a rare opportunity to tour the interior of the historic Masonic Lodge in the heart of Rockridge, located a few blocks south of Rockridge BART at 5449 College Avenue (between Forest and Hudson).

In addition to the syrupy goodness, there will be some amazing raffle prizes offered at each seating. With three seating options (8am, 9:15am, and 10:30am) — there's plenty of room for all, even during the busiest time frame.

Advance tickets are $12 each, with no service charge for online reservations. Children under age five eat for free (and do not require a ticket). Credit cards or PayPal are accepted. Tickets purchased onsite are $13 (pending space available) and can be purchased with cash, check, or credit cards. If you purchase online, you do not need to print out your tickets — your name will be on a guest list at the door. Reserve your tickets early!

*Visit https://www.claremontms.org/pta/pancake-breakfast/* for details.

# Oakland Tech Auction Goes Live February 23

*By Leslie Ayers*

The Oakland Technical High School Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) cordially invites our neighbors in Rockridge to participate in the school's annual online auction fundraiser starting on **Friday, February 23**.

The auction is the Tech PTSA's biggest annual fundraiser, and there will be hundreds of items available to bid on donated by generous local business owners, including gift certificates for use at restaurants, shops, and service providers in Rockridge and greater Oakland.

To bid online (2/23 through 3/6), please visit the auction homepage at https://oaklandtech.schoolauction.net/auction2024. Or, come for an evening of fun, food, and fundraising the annual **Gala on March 9** at Humanist Hall, 390 27th Street. ■



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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!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!



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# Sommelier Pairs Italian Wine Producers with the Local Community

*by Carol Kasparek*

**Emilia Aiello** has come full circle. Three generations of her family, herself included, have lived in Temescal-Rockridge, and she fondly recalls stories of when the neighborhood was filled with Italian families and Italian-run businesses. Her mother's family is originally from Liguria, and her father's family is from Sicily. As a result, the family maintained a strong sense of cultural and culinary identities that continue to this day.

Aiello notes that when choosing a home in their adopted country, Italians immigrants would look for a place with enough room to grow vegetables and herbs from the old country, and a basement where they could make and store their homemade brew. For many, Rockridge fit the bill.

Aiello mastered her wine knowledge in New York City, where she supported herself with restaurant employment while studying classical ballet. "I kept turning down promotions at restaurants to pursue dance," she recalls. Realizing that she had a future in the wine industry, she put her dancing on hold and went on to manage high-profile restaurants in Manhattan — becoming one of the first Italian site-specific certified sommeliers in the city.




Sommelier Emilia Aiello is inspired to bring people together Italian style.

After working two grape harvests in Sicily, creating maps for the Mt. Etna wine regions, and exploring the developing industry in the area, Aiello developed a unique insight into Sicilian wine production. She saw an opportunity to connect Italian wineries in the area with those who want to build upon their knowledge base and discover their personal preferences. This inspired her to open her own online business for southern Italian wines — and Cittavino & Co was born.

Cittavino & Co. (Citttavino means "wine citizen") brings people, wine, and food together in true Italian style. The wines are made from organically grown grapes, highlighting the characteristics of small vineyards and the many supporting community development projects in the region. In addition to wine, her monthly memberships and tasting events offer dolcini (slightly sweet) treats, caponata (a relish of chopped eggplant and assorted vegetables), olives from Sicily, and an assortment of antipasti from local producers.

"We connect with each other over these things. What you'll get from me is quality and someone who really cares about making your day," offers Aiello. *Molto bene.*

*To send your loved one a* ***San Valentino Wine Gram****, or to learn more, visit https://www.cittavino.co/.* ■

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# *Part Two:* Reinventing the Neighborhood Bar — the RIC's Long and Colorful History

*by Edward Guthmann*

*Part One of this story, which ran in the January edition of the* Rockridge News, *described the last years of Ye Olde Hut, a longstanding College Avenue bar, and the changes made by Scott Ayers and Jeff Saltzman when they bought the establishment and renamed it the Rockridge Improvement Club (RIC, for short). With physical upgrades and a slate of weekly activities — skee-ball tournament, trivia night, drag night, karaoke, live music, and deejays — they drew a younger clientele.*

When the RIC opened in June 2016, **Scott Ayers** and **Jeff Saltzman** got static for the new name, the irony of which escaped many people. "It seemed so snotty, you know?" Saltzman said. "People were like, 'Oh, you think you're gonna improve Rockridge, huh?'"

Ayers originally thought of calling the bar The Prancing Pony after the roadside inn where Frodo goes to meet Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*. Rockridge Improvement Club ultimately won because it echoes the civic organization that built the Craftsman-style structure in the early 1900s.

Rockridge was brand new back then. Formerly farmland, the area was developed in response to the thousands of San Franciscans displaced by the 1906 earthquake and fire. The Vernon-Rockridge Improvement Club opened its clubhouse at 5515 College Ave. in 1911, on a block that became the heart of the Rockridge commercial district.

"There was always the rumor that the place was originally a temperance club," said Ayers. Not true. If you reference the *Bulletin*, the Improvement Club's newsletter, several editions of which survive in the Oakland History Room of the Oakland Public Library, none of them mentions temperance or warns of the depredations of demon booze.

The club didn't inveigh against alcohol, but raised money and rallied support for civic improvements such as schools, a branch library, tree planting, street lighting, and sidewalk paving.

"We do not blow our horn about what we do," a club officer wrote in the *Bulletin* in 1915. "We just do it because it needs to be done for the good of the district."

The clubhouse had a kitchen, a 12×14-foot stage, dressing rooms, and a 30×40-foot main hall with a maple floor. It was rented out for weddings, religious services, card parties, plays, dances, and concerts. Neighborhood groups like the Kales Avenue Whist Club and Taft Avenue Sewing Club met there.

In 1920, the club vacated the building and The Hut opened. Prohibition became law early that year, so The Hut, calling itself a "recreation club," sold milkshakes and soft drinks, ice cream, cigars, and cigarettes. No liquor. It had a billiard table and rooms for chess and for reading. "Applications for membership may be made by persons of good character," announced an ad in the *Bulletin*.

The myth of the Rockridge Improvement Club's crusade against liquor probably grew from the

*RIC, see next page*

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*RIC, from previous page*

fact that The Hut — which wasn't associated with the Improvement Club — was forbidden by law to sell liquor. Prohibition was repealed by certification of the 21st Amendment on December 5, 1933, so it's a safe bet The Hut sold alcohol soon thereafter.

When construction began on BART and Highway 24 in the mid-1960s, hundreds of homes and businesses were razed in Rockridge and Temescal, and longtime residents fled to Contra Costa County. The neighborhood was depressed, crime spiked, but The Hut stayed open. The people who've lived all their lives in Rockridge — before the demolition — remember Rockridge as homey, unpretentious, not the upscale destination of today.

"I thought it was a little village," said **Catherine Griffing**. "This fun, tiny little village." "My dad would take us walking at night down to The Hut," remembered **Claire Lomax**, who lives on Harwood Avenue in the house her grandfather bought in 1913. She says that in the 1950s, "The Hut had a newsstand and cigar stand in front." A decade later, the bar was sketchier. "In my teens I walked by it daily on my way to Tech (Oakland Technical High School)," said **Annette Floystrup**.

"The Hut was known to be a place where biker gangs hung out and heroin was sold. For much of my life, no decent woman would be seen there, dead or alive."

Occasionally, former habitués of The Hut (later renamed Ye Olde Hut) wander into the RIC and tell stories. "Apparently, there was a guy who lived upstairs in the bar for a long, long time," said Ayers. "There's ghost stories and stories of people dropping dead at the bar. All kinds of, 'This place is haunted' or whatever. I've never seen anything like that."

Ayers said he's happy with the energy the RIC generates today and likes that it's become a performance space and community gathering spot — not just a drinking establishment or a sad refrain on Ye Olde Hut. "People don't come here to sit and get hammered," he said. "It's not a drunk's paradise." ■

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




## February 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. All ages and skill-levels welcome.

**Read to a Dog**: Thursdays at 4pm.

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

**Craft Program**: Annual Valentines Making Craft Session. All ages welcome. Tues, 2/13, 4pm.

### For Teens:

**Cookies and Crafts**: Wednesday, 2/7; 2pm-3pm. Presented by Teen Advisory Board with support of Friends of the Rockridge Library.

**Teen Advisory Board**: Wednesday, 2/7; 3:30pm-4:30pm. Join the Rockridge Branch Library Teen Advisory Board (TAB) and take an active role at your local library. Every 2nd Wednesday in the TeenZone. New members welcome. NOTE: NEW MEETING DAY.

### For Adults:

**Rockridge Book Club**: Every 2nd Saturday, 3:30pm-4:30pm. Please call 510-597-5017 for more info and a copy of the book. February's book is *What You Don't Know Will Make a Whole New World*: A Memoir by Doroty Lazard who will join the discussion remotely.

*Beyond the Game*: Dr. Vernon L. Andrews Explores 'Policing Black Athletes': Saturday, 2/17, 1pm-3:30pm. Dr. Andrews is an accomplished scholar, and sociologist. Don't miss this opportunity during Black History Month.

### Meet the Authors:

Wednesday, 2/21, 6:30pm–7:30pm. Our Spring series kicks off with Dr. Akilah Cadet discussing her book, *White Supremacy is All Around: Notes from a Black Disabled Woman in a White World*. Co-sponsored by A Great Good Place for Books who will have books for signing.

Saturday, 2/24, 1:30pm-2:30pm. A bonus Meet the Author event with Irene Sardanis, Ph.D., who will be launching her book, *Connections: The Power of Connecting with Strangers*.

Writing to Heal with Jennifer Lang: Tuesday, 2/27, 6:30pm–7:30pm. Lang will teach a workshop on Writing to Heal; putting our emotions into words, especially when words fail us.

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

**Note: The library will be closed Monday, February 19 in observance of Presidents' Day**

www.oaklandlibrary.org/events.

# IN MEMORIAM
## Claire Wahrhaftig

**Claire Isaacs Wahrhaftig**, a generous, loving, and exuberant free spirit, open-minded with an amazing range of interests, passed away on December 31, 2023, after a long and fulfilling life of friendship, love, community, work, and philanthropy.

Claire was a fourth-generation San Franciscan, born February 12, 1933. She grew up among extended family in SF's Richmond District. She was a proud graduate of Lowell High, and held degrees in History of Art and Speech and Drama from Pomona College. She had also received a fellowship at the Harvard University Arts Administration Program.

Claire had a talent for connecting with people. She kept childhood and college friends close throughout her life and was always open to new experiences. As a young woman, Claire lived an adventurous life. After college she went to Israel on a freighter, wanting to visit the brand-new country and study Hebrew as part of her desire to learn more about Jewish history. While there, she traveled, worked clerical jobs, and moonlighted as a nightclub Jazz singer.

Her commitment to social justice led her to march for civil rights in Selma, Alabama, in 1965. Fifty years later, Claire returned to Selma for the 50th anniversary commemoration where she reconnected with several people she had met back in 1965.



She wrote about those experiences in *The Rockridge News*.

Claire enjoyed a close, loving marriage with **Bill Wahrhaftig** until his untimely death in 2005. Together they built a home filled with art and mementos from nearly 20 years of traveling to over 14 countries. After his death Claire continued to travel, including a trip to China as part of a Stagebridge joint friendship and shared storytelling visit.

During her distinguished 30-year career of public service in arts and museum education, Claire held numerous positions including Executive Director of the San Francisco Arts Commission and Supervisor of Education for the SF Museum of Modern Art. At the Arts Commission, she developed grants for funding the City's public statues and restoration of the Coit Tower murals, and founded the City's Youth Arts Festival. Claire had also been the Director of the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Junior Arts Center where she initiated "Heart to Heart," a city-wide arts program integrating disabled children with the general population.

After retirement, she was a volunteer for the Alameda County Suicide Prevention Hotline and served as editor and writer for the *Rockridge News*.

Claire would have been 91 years old on February 12, which she always said she proudly shared with Abraham Lincoln. Memories of Claire will live on in the hearts of her Rockridge neighbors and the Wahrhaftig, Greene, Groeschel, Fisher, and Cole families. ■




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# RN Classifieds

List your 36-word message here for only $22 (phone number counts as one word). Make check payable to RCPC, and write "Rockridge News Classifieds" in the memo line. **The deadline for March is February 21, 2004** (available March 2). Mail to: RCPC, 4900 Shattuck Ave., PO Box 22504, Oakland, 94609-20131. For more information, email Susan at smontauk@gmail.com.

**Living With Scoliosis: A Workshop with Galen Cranz**
Saturday, February 17, 10:00 am - 5:30 pm $275/person ($75 for supportive adults accompanying teens).For more information, and to register (by February 10), email galen@berkeley.edu.

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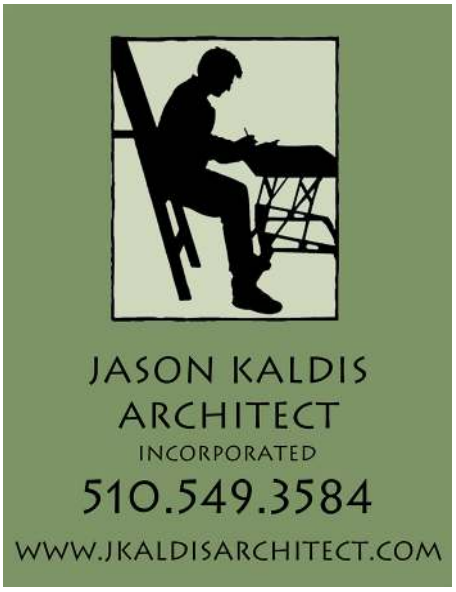
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