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



Photo by Judy Berne

Alexis Madrigal is as comfortable in the kitchen as he is co-hosting KQED's *Forum*.

Eyes on Rockridge: KQED's Forum Co-host Highlights the Bay Area

by Judith Doner Berne

Alexis Madrigal could be the ultimate multitasker. As he marks his third anniversary on June 21st as co-host of *Forum*, KQED's weekday live-radio talk show, the husband of **Sarah Rich**, father of **Orion**, 10, and **Flora**, 8, and **Laszlo,** his dog, Madrigal simultaneously pursues a variety of endeavors.

These varied interests include running marathons and swimming laps, publishing the online *Oakland Garden Club* newsletter that has 16,000-plus subscribers; appearing in conversation

Eyes on Rockridge, see page 10

SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, October 13
Rockridge Kitchen Tour

by Star Lightner, Kitchen Tour Chair

Hello Rockridge, the 2024 Rockridge Kitchen/ADU Tour date has been set for **Sunday, October 13**. Planning is underway and we need your help in several areas.

First, we are seeking Kitchen Tour volunteers interested in helping solicit sponsors (advertisers) for the Kitchen Tour brochure… but fear not, you will not be working on your own… we have volunteers already on board and lots of historical information to guide you. This is a great opportunity for people who like to do sales.

Kitchen Tour, see page 3

Message from RCPC Chair

by Casey Farmer

National Night Out 2024 is August 6

Plan Ahead for Your Block Party

The first Tuesday evening in August is known as National Night Out. It's a time dedicated to bringing neighbors together at block parties all across the country. Whether your gathering is large or small, or offers light bites or a huge potluck, it's important to get together at least once a year with our neighbors to build and strengthen community.

Take this Opportunity to:

- Meet new neighbors and introduce them to each other.
- Re-learn the names of many neighbors you may have forgotten.
- Build a more resilient neighborhood: Begin a conversation about emergency preparedness or training together with the City's CORE program (see www.oaklandca.gov/services/readyoakland).
- Collect emails for future communications.

Chair Message, see next page

Chair Message, from front page

Last year, I helped coordinate the Belgrave/Carlton/Thomas street party where we hired a local band to jazz things up — The Miles Turk Trio. **Miles** is a recent alum of Oakland School for the Arts and is now a professional musician. For a modest fee, his trio played great jazz thanks to electricity provided via an extension cord to a local home. If you're looking to hire a band, "Follow the Music" (followthemusic.live) can help. The site was created by a coalition of industry veterans and partners who are committed to mentoring and supporting some of the best emerging artists in the Bay Area and beyond.

More NNO Organizing Tips:

1) My #1 suggestion: Supply name tags (available at Cole Hardware) because they help break the ice for shy folks and make learning new names easier for all.

2) Ask neighbors to bring a dish made with their favorite summer produce — perhaps from their garden!

3) Have a competition: Who makes the best sangria or soda spritzer?

4) Need tables and chairs? Ask your neighbors to bring them.

Land Use Committee Meeting

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

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

The June meeting has been cancelled.
The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 18, on Zoom

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

How/Where to Advertise:

- **Flyers on doorsteps are always the most direct way (no need to produce anything fancy).**
- **Use your neighborhood or block email list. Send a "Save the Date" a few weeks out and a reminder a few days prior.**
- **Post flyers on signposts or telephone poles**
- **Put a sign in front of your own house: "Join us for a Block Party on Tuesday, August 6 at 6pm."**
- **Word of mouth… be sure to ask your RSVP'ed guests to help spread the word.**

This year, the event is sponsored by the Oakland Ballers, Oakland's newest professional baseball team.

Register Your Block Party

If you register your block party with the City early, you will be mailed an NNO Host Packet that includes prizes and give-away items for the kids, caution tape, and balloons, along with flyers with safety information to share. **The registration deadline is Monday, July 29**, and can be done online at: https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/national-night-out-2024.

To keep the kids entertained, sidewalk chalk is always a hit, or maybe create an enclosure for riding scooters, bikes, skates, etc. Take photos and send them to editor@rockridge.org; RCPC loves celebrating community building and will share them on online at Rockridge.org, and include some of them in the September edition of the *Rockridge News*. ■

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THE RockridgeNews

The Rockridge News was founded in March 1986 by **Don Kinkead** and is published monthly (except August). It's 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 topics you'd like to see covered in the *Rockridge News*? Have questions about newsletter distribution? Want to volunteer to be a *Rockridge News* distributor? We'd love to hear from you.

Want to write a Letter to the Editor? Letters are limited to 450 words and are published at the editor's discretion. Send letters to: editor@rockridge.org. Please include your name, email, and street of residence. **Deadline is the 11th of each month for the upcoming newsletter.**

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 JULY/AUG 2024: June 20, 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.*

Kitchen Tour, from front page



Secondly, we need a volunteer to interview homeowners and write up a description of their kitchen with their narrative. We have a great volunteer writer from the last tour, but could use one more. This is a great opportunity for people who appreciate the nuances of a story.

Also, we need people interested in approaching business owners on College Avenue and Piedmont Avenue, and in Montclair, to request permission to post Kitchen Tour posters at their businesses. This is a great gig for someone who likes to meet business owners and help with a great cause at the same time. Along those lines, we need people to hang Kitchen Tour banners in select neighborhoods. This is pretty straightforward and not very time-consuming, and helps advertise the tour in other parts of the city.

Lastly, we would like to add another kitchen or ADU to the tour. If you have a recently remodeled kitchen or recently built ADU and you'd like to be on the tour, please email kitchentour@rockridge.org.

Owners of kitchens and ADUs on the tour are encouraged to invite their architect, designer, and/or contractor to be present during the tour to greet and speak to attendees about the project since many attendees are looking for ideas for their project. If you loved your architect or contractor, this is a great way to say thank you by allowing them to shine and meet potential new clients.

I was on the tour in 2017, and I can tell you it's exciting to be a part of it — and a great perk is that you get free tickets to visit the other kitchens while people are visiting yours.

For questions, submit kitchen candidates, or to volunteer, email kitchentour@rockridge.org. ■

✦ HISTORIAN'S CORNER ✦

Building High-Density Housing in Rockridge

by Annette Floystrup

This is part one of two to examine the recent history of high-density housing in Rockridge. This history is exclusive to projects submitted to the City of Oakland Planning Department and reviewed by RCPC. Projects that did not enter the formal planning process are not included.

Urban high density is defined as ten units per acre or above, versus the typical suburban area with four units per acre. Historically, Rockridge has been designated as high-density, with 11 units per acre, but with the proliferation of ADUs, Rockridge now averages 12 to 13 units per acre.

High Density Proposals: Submitted and Built

Since 2008, RCPC has reviewed the creation of 556 units of high-density housing, both new and repurposed. RCPC has worked with residential neighbors to mitigate any negative impacts due to increased shadowing, additional traffic, parking, garbage, and noise. There have been very few viable "opportunity sites" within the RCPC boundaries, and most of these projects lay at its perimeter.

RCPC has consistently taken a mediator role to improve projects for the benefit of the community. Developers benefit from the community input with project adaptations that streamline the city approval process and still allow the projects to be built profitably.

Merrill Gardens: 5238 Coronado
127 units, 4 and 5 stories, built in 2017 as senior-living units… and

The Baxter: 4901 Broadway
130 units, 4 and 5 stories, built in 2018

Both of these projects impacted neighbors on Coronado Avenue. In each case, the proposed project straddled two different City Planning Zones, with two differing height limits. RCPC supported the efforts of the Coronado neighbors to ensure height limit enforcement in each zone, which in each case resulted in the rear of the building, abutting the residential zone, being stepped down one story. Additional negotiated changes on the Merrill Gardens project produced better parking access and rerouted traffic onto 51st Street, away from residential neighbors.

Historian's Corner, see next page

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Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council

Rockridge Library's Upstairs Conference Room

Thursday, June 13, at 7pm

There will be a brief presentation by **Commissioner Yoana Tchoukleva** from the Safety and Services Oversight Commission regarding Measure Z.

A Zoom link is available to those who wish to attend remotely.

For more details, visit www.rockridgencpc.com

The Greater Rockridge NCPC meets every 2nd Thursday of the even numbered months.



Historian's Corner, from previous page

Idora Apartments: 5239 Claremont
33 units, 5 stories, built in 2017

This project was first reviewed in 2008 as a co-housing development. The final project was built after the relocation of the historic Kingfish Bar from the original site to its new home around the corner on Telegraph Avenue.

Clifton Hall: 5276 Broadway
41 senior units, managed by Satellite Affordable Housing Associates
21 family units, managed by the East Oakland Community Project
Built in 2002, repurposed in 2019

The former California College of the Arts dormitory was converted to senior and supportive housing for formerly homeless families in 2019 under the State's Project Homekey program. RCPC strongly supported this repurposing (*Rockridge News*, April 2021).

The Logan: 5110 Telegraph Avenue
204 units, 5 stories, built 2020

Nautilus Group, developers of this transit-oriented project, worked very creatively with RCPC to ensure that excess parking from the building would not impact the abutting residential zone. To ensure that tenants of the building could not obtain Residential Parking Permits (RPP), the developer recorded a restrictive deed covenant that runs with the land.

Seventeen of the residential units (or 15 percent) are affordable and offered at below-market rate (BMR). These BMR units are designated as "very-low-income," and made available exclusively to applicants earning less than 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), as defined by HUD. (In Oakland, that's $59,200/year for a two-person household.)

High-Density Proposal In the Pipeline

California College of the Arts Campus: 5212 Broadway

Emerald Fund Principal and President **Marc Babsin** made a presentation to RCPC at its February 2024 board meeting where he made it clear that construction on the project is unlikely to happen for two to three years, until the project is financially viable. Current adverse market forces include high interest rates, high construction costs, and Oakland's glut of available market-rate housing — including 10,000 market-rate units built since 2019. Babsin indicated that other developers are similarly postponing projects for several years until they can financially pencil out.

The project has been in process for seven years due to input from a large number of stakeholders. This process is detailed under Community Outreach at www.5212Broadway.com.

The comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has closed, and the Final EIR is not yet available. The proposal is for 448 units, consisting of 61 percent studios and one-bedroom units, and 31 percent two-bedroom and loft/townhouse units. Forty-five units (or 10 percent) are designated as "moderate income" units at 120 percent of AMI (In Rockridge, that's $142,000/year for a two-person household.).

The campus is currently closed for security reasons, however, Emerald Fund plans to continue over 100 years of community access by formally dedicating a 1.5-acre green space within the private development for public use, in conjunction with the preservation of historic Macky Hall. ■

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Market talk: June will prove to be a great month to watch the local market trends. Since most inventory for the year is in May, June sales gives us key activity and pricing data before heading deeper into the summer of an election year! Contact me to hear more about buying or selling options in this current market!

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June is Awareness Month for: Juneteenth, Pride, PTSD, Men's Health, Homeownership, Pollinators, Great Outdoors, Oceans, Alzheimers

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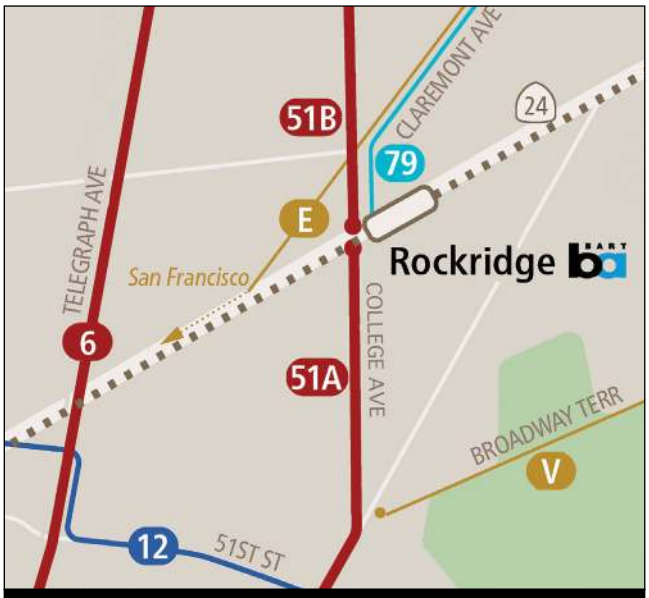
by Hannah Roeyer

The Rockridge BART station is hard to miss. But, did you know Rockridge is also home to an enviable network of bus routes? A bus runs through Rockridge nearly every three minutes, connecting our neighborhood to destinations throughout the East Bay and beyond.

Going North? **Line 51B** starts at Rockridge BART before heading north along College to the UC Berkeley campus. The line then cuts west across central Berkeley on University Ave, stopping at the Berkeley Amtrak station and ending at the Marina.

Line 79 takes a scenic path north from Rockridge BART, first to the UC Berkeley campus by way of Claremont, then winds through the lower Berkeley hills — with notable destinations including Chez Panisse, Solano Avenue, and El Cerrito High School — before it terminates at El Cerrito's BART Plaza.

Going South? **Line 51A** connects Rockridge BART to the south, running along College and then the length of Broadway, with stops including the Kaiser hospital complex, Uptown, Old Oakland, and Chinatown. It continues onto Alameda, serving most of the island



Bus lines 79, 51A, 51B, 6, 12, E, and V connect Rockridge to various points around the Bay Area.

along charming Santa Clara Avenue, and finally returns to Oakland's Fruitvale BART.

Passing through Rockridge: **Line 6** keeps it simple, connecting passengers along the length of Telegraph Avenue with stops along the way from northern Telegraph, through Temescal, Koreatown, and Uptown.

Line 12 cuts an ambitious route to carry passengers to and from business districts across the city. Starting near Berkeley's Fourth Street outdoor mall, it heads east across North Berkeley, including a stop at Monterey Market. It follows MLK Jr. Way down into Oakland, with a brief stop in Temescal; turns onto 51 Street, and then onto Piedmont Ave, where it deposits riders at the Piedmont Theater or any number of restaurants. The bus then jogs over to pass through Grand Avenue's restaurant district. The ride continues on Grand along the top of Lake Merritt before turning south to Jack London Square. For the adventurous, continue your journey via the Amtrak or ferry terminals in Jack London Square.

Rockridge is also served by two Transbay bus lines, Line E on Claremont, and Line V on Broadway Terrace. Both run Monday through Friday to bring commuters into downtown San Francisco.

How to Ride: Most lines run every 10-15 minutes; Line 12 and 79 run every 30 minutes. Standard adult fares are $2.25, or $84 for a monthly unlimited pass. Youth (under 18), Senior (65 and over), Disabled and Low-Income fares are half the cost after registering online with AC Transit. Riders can pay on board with cash, Clipper Card, or via the AC Transit mobile app.

See www.actransit.org for details. ■

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Bike Repair Stand Back in Business

by Jack Soares

Outside the heavily used Oakland Tool Lending Library (5205 Telegraph Avenue) with its collection of over 5,000 tools is another popular tool-laden destination, a bicycle repair stand. Both of these popular resources are available free to local residents.

Hanging from the stand's stainless-steel cables are wrenches, screwdrivers, tire irons — just about everything needed for a quick bike tuneup. There's even a pump for topping off tires. The stand has padded arms so that bikes can be hoisted to a convenient height for servicing.

"Unfortunately," said **Ty Yurgelevic**, founding staff member of the Tool Library, now retired and volunteering with the Friends of the Oakland Tool Lending Library (FOTLL), "as useful as the repair stand is, it's frequently vandalized." Thieves have clipped the cables and stolen all of the tools twice in the last three years. Most recently, they also cut the hose off the air pump.

Yurgelevic and **Celena Peet**, another FOTLL stalwart, were at the Oakland Tool Lending Library recently to replace the bike stand tools. "There's a lock box on the stand so that the tools can be safely tucked away when the Tool Library is closed," said Peet,



a local artist. "But keeping the tools safe from thieves means that they're also not available for regular people to use. Taking away the 24/7 convenience defeats the intent of having the bike repair stand."

"Stealing tools from this repair stand," said Yurgelevic, "is like stealing a resource from all of the people who use the stand."

The nearly $400 cost of the bike repair stand's tools is covered by the Friends of the Oakland Tool Lending Library's Tool Sales. Held on the lawn of the Temescal Branch Library right next to the bike repair stand from 10am until around 2pm on the first and third Saturday of every month (weather permitting), the Tool Sale offers a wide array of donated tools at bargain prices.

According to Peet who designed the tiny nonprofit's new "Oakland Tooligans" logo, "FOTLL is always looking for more tools, volunteers to help with the Tool Sale and its other tool-related projects, and finding free storage space for the donated tools and supplies for our free DIY workshops."

See www.FOTLL.org for more info. ■

Shop Local for a Better Community

by Jody Colley, Rockridge District Association

Our urban community has an abundance of easily accessible conveniences. With large distribution centers, the Port of Oakland, railway hubs, and multiple international airports nearby, almost anything can be purchased online and delivered within a day or two — allowing for worldwide competition for goods. But at what cost?

Every time you choose to purchase products and services from an independent local business, it has a ripple effect that reaches well beyond that single transaction. According to an economic impact analysis by the American Independent Business Alliance, 48 percent of each purchase made at a local independent business was recirculated locally (compared to less than 14 percent of purchases at chain stores) — this means that small independent retailers return more than three times as much money per dollar of sales to the local economy than chain store competitors.

Ensuring that small businesses thrive is essential to maintaining the soul of the community they serve. Your neighborhood business

Shop Local, see next page

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Shop Local, from previous page

uses your dollars to source their employees, contractors, suppliers, and vendors from the local region. The ripple effect continues as each business passes your dollar along to another locally owned company or independent operator — all because you made a conscious investment in your community. As acclaimed Bay Area author **Rebecca Solnit** once said, "Culture is not only beneficial to cities; in a deeper sense, it's what cities are for."

Matt Day, co-owner of Planterday (6004 College Avenue), agrees. When asked about why he's passionate about supporting independent businesses, Day said, "Think of it this way; you're not going to have a clay art workshop at Target. You're not going to have a terrarium workshop at Home Depot. And, you're certainly not going to have a sip-and-paint night at Starbucks. Our local merchants often host mini-events that bring communities together, build culture, and create destinations. These are the small, yet impactful ways local merchants become the heart of our communities. If the only places to shop were strip malls filled with big box stores, where would you take friends and relatives who come to visit? Where would you go on a Sunday stroll to relax?"

Planterday exemplifies how local businesses can contribute to community building. At its core, it could just be a plant shop. But Planterday offers locals and visitors so much more — hosting workshops; trivia and comedy nights; dinner parties; and educational classes. They also leverage their brick-and-mortar shop on bustling College Avenue as a platform to advocate and fundraise for mental health causes.



Matt Day and Yumi Look, Co-Founders of Planterday

Residents and small business owners alike are plagued with the challenges and costs of theft and vandalism that negatively impact the experience and costs of being located in Oakland. Small business owners and business districts can play a critical role in public safety and security. While they can't all hire professional security services, they are quick to remove graffiti, fix broken windows, light up dark sidewalks, and keep the foot traffic flowing day and night. They also regularly communicate with local agencies and organizations to report crime, find help for unsheltered populations, and respond to people experiencing urgent mental health issues. Operating a business in Rockridge means the owner and their employees must also become a neighborhood caretaker and an occasional first responder.

Matt Zimbalist, co-owner of Re-Up Refill Shop (6025 College Avenue), depends nearly exclusively on the local community for both practical proximity reasons and as part of their mission to be environmentally sustainable. When asked why shopping local matters, Zimbalist said, "Small businesses foster a sense of identity and community. They are powerful local economy drivers, provide meaningful jobs, reduce our dependence on driving and shipping, and make our streets more vibrant and safer.

"Given the rise of the convenience of online shopping, labor shortages, upticks in urban crime, and the pandemic, sadly we have seen a steady decline in traditional retail in our community. Now is the time to double down on supporting local businesses before there aren't enough left." ■





Growing a Business Writing Love Letters

by Skip Fogarty



Aviva Black delivers her finished family letter to client Temmy Millman.

The advent of genealogy services like 23-and-Me and Ancestry have enticed many to explore their familial roots, but the discovery of ancestors' names and origins often leads to other questions.

"Looking at a family tree, you see branches spreading out with the leaves bearing names and dates," says Rockridge neighbor **Aviva Black**. "I want to turn the leaves over and discover who these people really were and how they influenced one another."

To that end, Aviva started her business, Family Love Letters, interviewing mostly elderly folks to capture and document their true-life stories, inner wisdom, and desires. "The letters show how the individual became who he or she is today," she says. "And the client comes away with a sense of what's most important at this point in their life."

The inspiration for her business came after her father died. While going through his possessions, she discovered a letter in his desk that he'd left for her and her siblings. "He was a rabbi and had wisdom, wit, and a way with words. Whenever I want to be reminded of his voice, I read the letter," she says. "In writing his letter, my father honored the Hebrew tradition of 'l'dor v'dor' — meaning: from generation to generation."

A New Jersey native, Aviva earned an M.A. in Education from Hunter College and became an eighth-grade teacher and vice principal in a Brooklyn K-12 school. When she moved to California for what she thought was going to be a two-year visit, she reconnected with a University of Vermont friend, whom she later married. She and her husband Michael, a KQED executive, raised two children who attended Hillcrest School and Oakland Tech. Both are college-age now.

"My father's wonderful letter planted a seed that grew into a new chapter in my life," Aviva says. Creating similar personal histories for others was her inspiration, but she had zero experience running a business. She now calls herself a "solo-preneur," crediting the coaching and networking opportunities provided by an agency called Revenue Breakthrough.

Over the past few years, she's provided nearly 100 clients with an invaluable family touchstone in the form of an eight to 16-page "Love Letter." The creative process begins with a personal interview and entails "a series of guided and engaging conversations, often conducted by phone or over Zoom," she says. "We explore key people and events in the family — their traditions, values, and, generally speaking, the things that truly shape our lives." All of the writing work is done on Aviva's end and the entire project typically spans six to eight weeks.

Frequently, the project is initiated by a grown child who gives their parent the experience as a gift. Aviva has also hosted workshops for target audiences like wealth management planners, and synagogue and church groups.

"This experience was invaluable because it reminded my mother that she has an important story to tell," said **Linsey Morrison**, daughter of **Temmy Millman**. "We had some really meaningful conversations along the way," says Linsey. "It brought a

Love Letters, see next page

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Love Letters, from previous page



Aviva Black,
owner of Family Love Letters.

new dimension to our relationship."

Aviva points out that even families afflicted with tensions and rifts find the process meaningful. She says, "It's not therapy, but it is therapeutic. All my clients, even those who have had personal struggles, speak of family as a core value."

Printed on beautiful stationery, the finished letter is delivered in a keepsake box with multiple signed copies for descendants. The box also has extra room to store family documents, clippings, and photos.

Client **Gail Levy** told Aviva: "You did an incredible job of capturing who I am and who we are as a family. I went in thinking this would be a gift for my children. It's turned out to be a gift for me as well — one I'll treasure forever."

A Love Letter makes a very special gift for birthdays and holidays. (Hint: Father's Day) To learn more, visit familyloveletters.com and be sure to download the free gift, the "Six-Step Guide to Preserve Your Family Stories."

Skip Fogarty is a freelance writer and has lived in and loved Rockridge for 26 years. ■

Dogs of Rockridge

Lily Drekmeier lives on Hudson and her favorite local spots are Frog Park, where she loves to chase tennis balls, and Cole Hardware, where she knows there are complimentary dog treats. Lily is 7-years-old and was adopted from the Milo Foundation. She wears a protective bootie on her left paw because of some puppyhood nerve damage, but she still loves to be out and about taking in all of the neighborhood sights and scents.





Icy is a 3-year-old husky German shepherd. She is a very hyper dog who loves to play with her sister Cinnamon. Icy has a skill of jumping very high like a kangaroo. She enjoys going on long runs and somehow six-mile hikes are just warmups for her. We call Icy a "foster fail" because when we fostered her, we loved her so much we kept her.

– Nina, age 14

Fig Newton, a 12-year-old longhaired dachshund, is his human's little soulmate. He is a sweet, empathic pup who loves sunbathing at the beach, sniffing all his favorite spots around town, and sleeping on stacked pillows. He often receives compliments on his red and sable fur and big curious eyes, but he doesn't let this inflate his ego. And he loves a good adventure, preferring to travel everywhere with his human.



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.

Editor's Note: Sadly, Fig Newton passed away shortly before publication and is very missed by his human companions.



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eyes on Rockridge

Continued from front page

with nationally and internationally known guests for City Arts and Lectures; and hosting programs for Aspen Institute's "Ideas Festival." Madrigal is also finishing up a second nonfiction book, due out next spring, on racial justice in urban America — highlighting West Oakland activist **Margaret Gordon** and her family.

Evidenced first-hand, this reporter witnessed him making carnitas for dinner; welcoming an out-of-town guest; deploying said guest to College Avenue to buy wine; artfully arranging a tray of appetizers that included a cabbage leaf clipped from his garden as a backdrop his artichokes; and hugging Flora as she arrived from school. All the while, he never flagged in answering questions for our interview.

Although born in Mexico City, Madrigal describes himself as a West Coast kid. "I have an incredible appetite for the mix of cultures" in the Bay Area. "That's not how it is everywhere," he said as he spoke about growing up in Ridgefield, Washington, where his Mexican-born dad and East Coast-raised mom still live. Back then, it was a farming community with a population of 2,500 (now the fastest-growing city in the state). But that rural background fostered his love of nature.

"I'm pretty obsessed with the life sciences. Plants are a place for me to work things out. My dream for the (*Oakland Garden Club*) newsletter is that we will publish small books on people's affection for certain plants."

A graduate of Harvard, where he majored in English, Madrigal's career includes stints as a staff writer for *Wired*, senior technology editor for *The Atlantic* (where he is still a contributing writer), and as a visiting scholar at UC Berkeley's School of Information. He wrote *Powering the Dream — The History and Promise of Green Technology* (2011), and is co-creator of "Containers," an eight-part series podcast on global trade that he characterizes as "a love letter to the Port of Oakland."

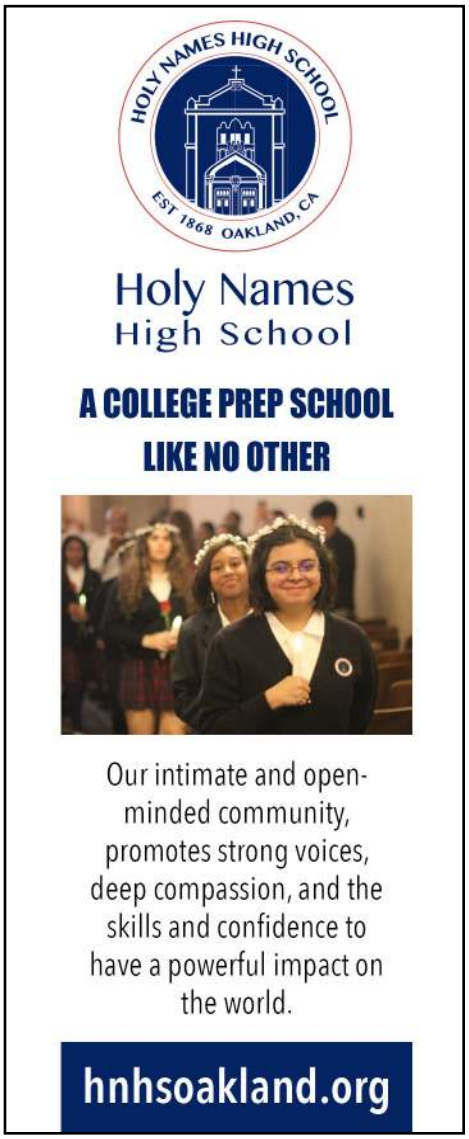
He also co-founded the Covid Tracking Project, the year-long study launched by *The Atlantic* that was ahead of the government in collecting and publishing the country's Covid-19 statistics.

Coincidentally, the day that the Covid Tracking Project shut down was the day he got the call from KQED to audition to replace **Michael Krasny,** who hosted *Forum* from 1993 to 2021. "Krasny embodied the brilliant professor," Madrigal said. "I'm more your friend who is really up on stuff." That involves reading background stories and listening to earlier interviews with his guests. And — unhappy that, of those who interviewed him on his green technology book, only one had read it — he reads every guest author's work. "It's sort of a point of pride," he said.

KQED differentiates between the first hour of *Forum* where Madrigal "convenes the diverse voices of the Bay Area," while, in the second hour, co-host **Mina Kim** "chronicles and centers Californians' experiences."

"It's been such an incredible match combining my temperament and my love for the Bay Area," he said. "There's nothing like a live radio show. *Forum* has a special role… *Forum*, the Warriors, that's kind of what makes the Bay Area. The loss of sports teams has given *Forum* a higher burden in getting our Bay Area together. I like institution building. It's fun for me to be part of places."

Eyes on Rockridge, see next page







Eyes on Rockridge, from previous page



Photo by Judy Berne

"I've never given a talk about *Forum*," Alexis Madrigal said earlier this year to a Berkeley City Club audience that included his kids, Flora, left, and Orion.

This includes his Fairview Park neighborhood where he first rented, and then bought a house in 2019 on the same street. "He's so humble," said neighbor **Joyce Kelley**, an educational therapist who is his children's "fairy godmother." After living above them since 2011, she laments that "when they moved seven houses away, it seemed too far."

During Covid, with pre-move renovations stalled, Kelley said, "Sarah and Alexis put together a school in that house. Parents took turns teaching. We were like a little pod. We had outdoor gatherings. I felt normal."

As for *Forum*, "What I appreciate is his heartfelt listening," she said. "He's always so knowledgeable, but he doesn't lead with his ego."

As a fan of *Forum* since she moved to Rockridge in 1990, **Susan Montauk** said she was skeptical about KQED finding an equally knowledgeable moderator to replace Krasny. "A few guest moderators and months later I was introduced to Alexis Madrigal on the air (mustn't forget a talented Mina Kim in the second hour), and my skepticism turned to absolute pleasure from the get-go.

"Madrigal's manner and style puts guests totally at ease," Montauk said. "He seems to be able to moderate any topic, no matter how thorny, and I always learn from his interviews. I'm especially pleased when he features an Oakland topic since he lives here and knows the territory that much better."

"I was pretty comfortable early on," Madrigal said, "but there are levels to it. I like the job more with each passing week." His "favorite all-time interview" was with **Ada Limon**, the 24th Poet Laureate of the United States. "She's just the absolute best. **George Saunders** (American author of *Lincoln in the Bardo* among others) was pretty great too.

"I love it when the (call-in) board's all lit up and we're talking to the Bay Area," he said. "Listeners hear people's literal voices. It's a community conversation and makes me happy to go to work each day."

Have a Rockridge story that needs telling? Email judyberne@att.net. ■

Media Advisory: Coffee with a Cop

Meet and Chat with Our Oakland Officers

Join members of the Oakland Police Department on **Thursday, June 13, from 11am to 1pm, at McDonald's** (4514 Telegraph Avenue) for a friendly conversation with your local officers.

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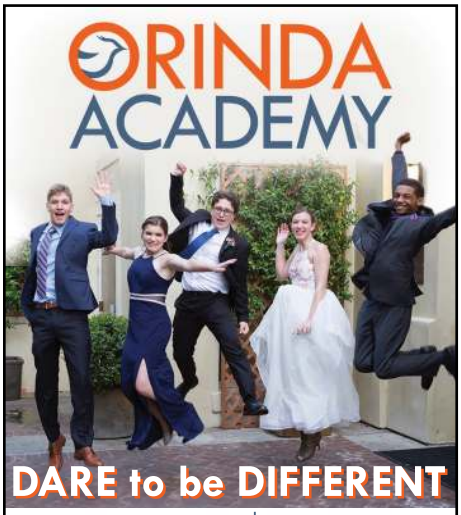
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Bringing the Joy of Music to Rockridge, and Beyond

by Carol Kasparek

In 2003, Rockridge Chorale Director **Devi Jameson** made a leap of faith. After several years as Music Director at St. Theresa's in Oakland, she decided to leave that position and form a master chorus which would integrate a variety of musical genres to perform in a range of settings. Jameson asked for members through her professional channels and by putting up posters at her local gym. She was a bit surprised at how quickly a core of 20-30 people coalesced into the Rockridge Chorale.

Jameson was born in Shanghi, where her parents had relocated from Goa, India. Her mother practiced medicine and her father ran a factory and built pianos. When the Communist Party ousted non-citizens, the family moved back to India. Jameson grew up in Bangalore with her parents and 11 siblings. She came to the U.S. for graduate school, emigrating to this country with her mother, three brothers and a sister. She has lived in Rockridge since the 1980s with her husband, three children, and now five grandchildren.

Venues and events span the Bay Area and the globe. The Chorale supports professional opera singers and visiting soloists, and often joins with other choruses for large-scale performances. They frequently visit assisted living centers, hospitals, and retirement communities. They have performed at Carnegie Hall and participated in the 80th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack.

This month, the Chorale will join the celebration in Salzburg for the anniversary of the Mozart Coronation Mass. Performances frequently are fundraisers, with the latest one held on Mother's Day that raised thousands of dollars for Save the Children.

One of the earlier members, **Madison Tyler**, recalls a series of casual yet focused auditions. His extensive singing background helped him work through the varied repertoire of classical, jazz, and Broadway musicals. "Devi treats everybody the same" making certain the group is ready for the pieces she introduces. "She molds us," he noted, and has a way of intensifying "our humanity and commitment."

> ***"Devi challenged me to do something I never dreamed I could do. "She's very forgiving, yet has high standards."***

Nora Simmons came to the Chorale with no singing experience and doesn't recall having an audition. "Devi challenged me to do something I never dreamed I could do," said Simmons. "She's very forgiving, yet has high standards." Simmons has begun to sight read, committed to the two hours per week of practice required for membership. With her love of music, the Chorale has been a realization of a childhood dream.

"Devi was ahead of her time in realizing the power of music to enliven people in memory care," offered Simmons. Jameson created "Decades," a program in which the singers learned songs from each of the early decades of the 20th century. "We have less need for the 1910s as ever fewer members of our audience

Rockridge Chorale, see next page

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This photo was taken at a hotel in Paris before the group set out for a performance to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of D-Day and the Liberation of France — they sang at Normandy and placed wreaths. Following that, they performed in Chapaize, France during their summer music series.

Rockridge Chorale, from previous page

remember songs from that period," she noted.

Tyler described a memorable moment singing on the shores of the Sea of Galilee where they sang "a gorgeous piece" by local composer **Dan Forrest**. "I have been around the world twice, and this was one of the most uplifting moments of my life," he recalled.

Devi, Madison, and Nora all describe the Chorale as a family. The weekly sessions are music-driven, yet deeply social. People come early and stay late. Many travel outside the country twice a year for the group's performance schedule. The Rockridge Chorale welcomes entire families to come and hear them sing, especially now with the formation of their Children's Chorale for ages 6-12.

"We are always looking for singers for all sections," Jameson emphasized. "Singing feels good, and you double the joy when you sing to somebody who is a sponge taking in that joy."

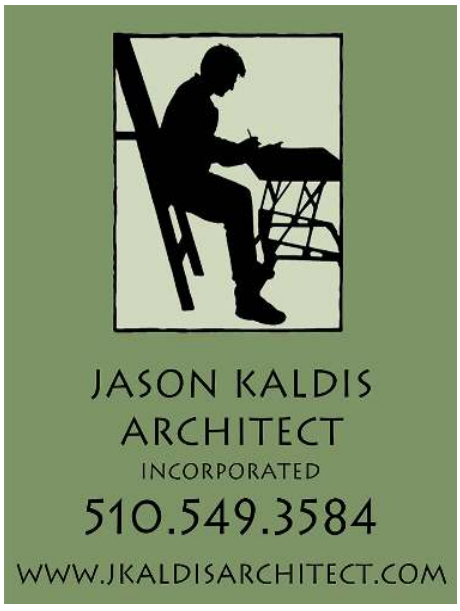
See their website for more information and inspiration to join at https://www.rockridgechorale.org/. ■











IN MEMORIAM
Larry Worth Olund



Larry was known around town as "the cat in the hat."

by Annette Floystrup

Rockridge resident and businessman, **Larry Worth Olund**, 89, passed away peacefully on Thursday, April 18, at his home in the company of family and caregivers. A familiar sight on College Avenue, Larry was one of the business and property owners who helped stabilize and revitalize College Avenue after the construction of Hwy 24 and BART devastated the business district, displaced homeowners and renters, and cratered local land values.

Larry's father sold cars, and cars became Larry's passion from an early age. At Albuquerque High School in New Mexico, he met and became good friends with the Unser brothers, Jerry, Bobby, and Al, soon thereafter to be among the most famous of Indy 500 racers. Larry dabbled in car racing as a pit crewman and mechanic, occasionally, racing himself, but after suffering minor burns in an engine fire, his favorite part of car racing became building cars rather than driving them.

In 1955, at just 21 years old, he became Shell Oil's youngest service station owner/operator at the corner of Claremont and College Avenues.

In addition to selling gas and providing simple repair services, Larry innovated by selling tires and occasionally used cars from his high-traffic gas station. Over the next 20 years, and long before the enactment of equal employment opportunity laws, Larry had one of the most diverse employee groups within the Shell network of stations, employing hundreds of people during the 20 years he owned the gas station.

Larry eventually switched from Shell to Texaco, taking over a Rockridge service station located at the corner of Chabot and College Avenues where the Dreyer's corporate headquarters now stands.

Investing in College Avenue in the late 1960s and early1970s was risky, but Larry, along with a small number of other local small business owners,



took that chance to support the neighborhood he loved. He formed long-term relationships with tenants like First Federal Savings and Loan Association of San Rafael, the Claremont Rug Company, and especially the Giovanetti family (of Rockridge Realty). He provided a key tenant with an unheard-of 40-year lease to anchor a highly-visible, significant corner.

In 1987, the City of Oakland was offered the opportunity to buy the building at the corner of College and Miles, where the original Rockridge branch library was located and where Ain't Normal now operates. This small library had served the community for 63 years, but after the City declined to buy the building, it was purchased by the Olunds who continued renting the space to the library at a nominal fee. When dry rot had caused it to sink several inches, the building had to be vacated due to the extensive repairs needed to fix the building's structural integrity. The library closed at that location in September 1987.

The Texaco Station was Larry's last retail business on College Avenue, but he continued to invest in real estate and actively manage his properties, often choosing tenants that benefited our local community. He was a familiar sight walking along College Avenue in his signature hat.

Larry brought both his children, **Larry, Jr.** and **Karen Olund Powell**, into the family business, and is survived by them and his loving spouse, **Anne Hefferan Olund**, along with many extended family members and friends in our community. ■



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

For more information, email Susan at smontauk@gmail.com.

Deadline for July/Aug newsletter is: June 20, 2024 (available July 6).

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June Events at the Rockridge Library

For Children

Summer Reading Program: Read a little every day to get prizes! Come in for special programs:

Amber Hines Music for Littles: 6/1 , Saturday @ 10:30am

Zany Zoey Magic & Acrobatics: 6/4, Tuesday @ 6:30pm

Fratello Marionettes: 6/11, Tuesday @ 6:30pm

East Bay Parks Intro to Wild Animals: 6/15, Saturday @ 10:30am

Rene Y Familia Musica: 6/18, Tues @ 6:30pm

Vivarium – Reptiles and More: 6/25, Tuesday @ 6:30pm

Storytime Thursdays and Saturdays; 10:30am.

Chess Club: Wednesdays at 4 pm. All ages and skill-levels welcome.

Build, Make, Play CRAFTS and Read to a Dog: Thursdays at 4 pm every week in June & July.

Intergenerational Origami: Join Ellen for amazing folding practice on Tuesday 6/4 at 4pm, & Tuesday 6/18 at 6:30pm.

For Teens ages 12 through 18

Learn to Carve a Rubber Stamp at Rockridge: Wednesday 6/5; 3-4pm. An artist from Rock Paper Scissors Collective is coming to the library to show you how to carve your own rubber stamp.

Henna for Teens at Rockridge: Wednesday 6/12; 3-4pm. Learn about the ancient art of henna at the library this summer and get your own Henna tattoo with artist Rachel Palacios.

Teen Advisory Board: Wednesday, 6/12; 4-5 pm. 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. New members welcome.

Make Ice Cream: Wednesday 6/26; 3-4pm. Yum – enough said!

For Adults

Ask Your Area Home Experts: Every 2nd Friday, noon-2pm. Get answers and connections from a Senior Loan Advisor and a Realtor, both Rockridge locals. Have questions answered about home ownership, maintenance, finance, investing, ADUs, downsizing, moving, and more.

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

Holiday: The library will be closed Wednesday, June 19 in observance of Juneteenth.

www.oaklandlibrary.org/events.

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ROCKRIDGE BOOK CLUB

Meets every 2nd Saturday, 3:30pm to 4:30pm at the Rockridge Library

Please call (510) 597-5017 for info and to get a copy of the book.

June's book is:
The Last White Man by Mohsin Hamid

— Meet the Author —

Wednesday, June 26th, 6:30-7:30. Visual Artist, Claudia Marseille, will discuss her memoir, *But You Looks So Normal: Lost and Found in a Hearing World*. The author will sign books made available for purchase by A Great Good Place for Books.





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