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From Curbside Junk to Global Reuse Revolution

by Chris Ayan

William Chui didn't set out to create a global, student-run recommerce chain. It all started with a simple dog walk in Oakland when he came across something unexpected: a pile of household items — dishes, books, Legos, even some crystals — abandoned on the curb. "It was such a waste to see these really nice, valuable street treasures left out and destined for the landfill," William explains. That small moment sparked an idea that's since grown into something much bigger: Stooping Club (https://collegeprepstooping.org).

Now a senior at College Preparatory School, William took what began as a hobby — picking up curbside finds — and turned it into Stooping Club, a free online platform for donating and "shopping" preloved items. Launched in October 2023, Stooping Club operates like a recommerce store, but with one key difference: everything is free. The goal? To transform society's throwaway culture into one of reuse and sustainability. "Everything on Stooping Club is free so everyone can appreciate the culture of reuse," William says.

In less than a year, the club has made a significant impact. The Oakland branch has diverted over 3,200 items from landfills, reducing over 10,000 kilograms of CO_2 emissions. And the items collected aren't just old knick-knacks. Some of the most surprising finds have included $1,000 paintings, Air Jordan shoes, guitars, and even a working Xbox 360. But for William, this isn't just about cool finds — it's about changing people's mentality toward consumerism. "I see my mission as reducing waste and shifting the mentality for reuse, and have people start thinking about what they need versus what they buy."



William Chui loves to go "shopping" for new website items to share.

What started as a local project has now gone global. Stooping Club now

Stooping Club, see next page

Thanksgiving Day Meals To-Go at College Ave. Presbyterian Church

by Rev. Monte McClain

For nearly 50 years, the College Avenue Presbyterian Church Oakland community has partnered with the greater Rockridge community to host a neighborhood-empowered annual Thanksgiving Day community meal. Since the appearance of Covid in 2020, we've adapted to a take-out format for our meals — for those who come to eat and those who come to serve. This year, with your help, we are aiming to provide 250 to-go meals on **Thanksgiving Day, November 28, from 11am-12pm**, at our campus at 5951 College Avenue.

We want to invite you, our Rockridge neighbors, to come help. This has always been a joint project with diverse members of our Rockridge Community — involving congregational members, local merchants, and residents. We can't solve all of the housing and food insecurity problems around us, but together we can respond to the needs of those

Thanksgiving, see page 4

Kitchen Tour A Smashing Success

by Star Lightner, RCPC Board Member and Kitchen Tour Chair

Thank you Rockridge! The 2024 Kitchen Tour was well attended with more than 380 people touring the eight kitchens and two ADUs. It was a gorgeous Sunday afternoon — not too hot, not too cold — and scores of people walked around Rockridge visiting the kitchens, talking to architects, designers and contractors, as well as the tour sponsors who provided much-appreciated tasty treats. Funds raised will go to support neighborhood events like the Halloween Parade and Rock & Stroll, as well as beautification projects and community grants. Please contact chair@rockridge.org if you have an idea for a project.

KT, see page 3



College Prep students Matthew Gentner, Daphne Green, Ruoxi "Lexi" Zhu, William Chui, Tiago de Figueiredo, Caetano de Figueiredo, and Jack Sample.

Stooping Club, from front page

operates worldwide, including new branches opening as far away as Ethiopia, Belarus, and Canada.

Each branch follows the same core mission: Take usable items, give them a second life, and rethink the idea of waste entirely. The expansion hasn't come without effort, but it's earned the club recognition from major organizations. The Hershey Company awarded Stooping Club a $500 Heartwarming Project Action Grant, and William's work has been recognized in *The Harvard Crimson*, and by Waste Management and others.

William's teacher and club advisor, **Rong Zhang**, speaks to the impact his student's work has had. "William is thoughtful about the world and the future. His philosophy has inspired many young people, and several schools in the Bay Area have already adopted his model," Zhang said. Seeing William's hands-on approach — from collecting items to organizing donations — has left a lasting impact on those around him.

As William prepares to graduate in 2025 and head on to college, his role in the Stooping Club will shift. He plans to pass on the leadership of the Oakland branch to a successor, but will continue overseeing the organization's global network. His long-term vision? He sees a future where waste is minimized and reuse is the norm, not the exception.

For now, William remains at the helm, inspiring a generation of young people to join the fight against waste. His work with the club is already reshaping the way people think about what they throw away, and as the organization continues to grow, so too does its impact… one forgotten curbside find at a time. ■



THE RockridgeNews

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

KT, from page one

Many Thanks to Everyone Who Made the 2024 Kitchen Tour Such a Success

Thank You, Homeowners who generously opened their homes and kitchens to our tour guests, patiently answered questions, and made themselves available for many preliminary house visits. Without you, here would have been no tour: **Ryan Pearl** and **Rory Glenn**, **Carol Emert**, **Jennifer Daskal** and **Jesse Attix**, **Judith Katz** and **Steven Grady**, **Jen and Brian McKillips**, **Jeanee and Tony Hoffman**, **Bryan Heckenlively** and **Shilpi Agarwal**, and **Jody London** and **Mike Aronson**, **Maikao Grare** and **David Pingatore**, and **Jenn Ritchey** and **Sachin Agarwal**.

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Thank You, Sponsors:

PLATINUM: Remy Weinstein who made possible the outstanding banners and posters.

GOLD: Daniel Stea who made our beautiful full-color brochure possible.

MARBLE: HDR Remodeling and **Ron Kriss/Andrew Pitarre**.

GRANITE: Jason Kaldis/David Collins and **Allie Pembleton**.

OAK: Jewish Community Center of the East Bay and **Proyecto Build**.

Thank you, 40+ docents. You all made time for training sessions, recruited friends to join the docent crew, described the kitchens and ushered tour-goers smoothly and graciously through the homes.

Thank you architects, contractors, design consultants, and craftspeople who gave up a Sunday afternoon to meet guests and talk about kitchens.

We also thank our unofficial sponsor, Market Hall, for hosting the registration table for the first time and went the extra mile to help make this a great event! And… a special shout out to our community's generosity — as a result, we were able to offer a bunch of free tickets to those who otherwise couldn't afford them.

We loved putting on this event for the community and are so grateful for everyone's generous contribution to RCPC. To share your feedback, please email kitchentour@rockridge.org. See you again in two years. ■

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Thanksgiving, from page one

struggling with hunger, solitude, joblessness, and high inflation.

A financial gift of $7.50 provides a hearty turkey dinner with all the fixings for someone in need. For as little as $30, you can feed a family of four. Donations from people like you are what make this community meal possible.

You can also give of your time. We need volunteers — lots of them — to help cooking at home, preparing the site, serving the meal, and cleaning up afterward. It's a great way to celebrate the holiday, serve others, and get to know your neighbors. We gladly welcome the volunteer help of children accompanied by a parent.

To donate money and/or time, visit us online at www.capcoakland.org/thanksgiving-meal, email the church office at capcoakland@gmail.com, or call (510) 658-3665.

Thank you for partnering with CAPC by responding to help those in need. ■



Photo provided by Monte McClain

Volunteers Ann Iverson, Joy Barnes, Linda Davis, Sharon Nelson, and Al Barnes

Give Thanks, Pay it Forward: Help Fill Holiday "Blessing Bags"

by Maya Patil

As Thanksgiving Day approaches, we are reminded of the importance of community and compassion. This year, College Avenue Presbyterian Church is calling on the community to make a difference through its Blessing Bag Program to help neighbors in need.

The program started from an observation during its weekly Friday Night Meal. As meals were shared with neighbors experiencing food insecurity, it became apparent that their challenges extended beyond hunger. While individual needs varied, the most common requests were for clothing and personal care items. This realization inspired action — the creation of Blessing Bags.

This year, we're excited to host a dedicated Blessing Bag Booth alongside our church's annual meal where people can stop by and pick up essential items and create a personalized Blessing Bag, ensuring they receive exactly what meets their needs, and that everyone feels valued and supported during the holidays.

To make sure this event is a success, we warmly encourage community support. We are currently collecting the following donations: New socks and underwear, t-shirts, gently used jackets and pants, toiletries (personal hygiene items such as soap, shampoo, toothbrushes and toothpaste), and even monetary donations that will help purchase additional personal items that may not be easily obtained.

Your contributions ensure that our neighbors will have access to items that promote dignity and well-being. Every donation, no matter how small, helps us spread generosity and compassion in our community.

To support our cause, email capcblessingbags@gmail.com. To make a secure online donation or learn more about our church and our Thanksgiving meal, visit capcoakland.org. Thank you for your support. ■

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The Monk's Kettle Opens on College Avenue

The Monk's Kettle (founded 2007) is a craft beer and wine tavern offering a top-notch beer list and from-scratch kitchen. Originally located in SF's Mission District, The Monk's Kettle opened Halloween week after passing all final inspections.

The new location is open daily from 11:30am to midnight. Chef **Raiden Brenner** will continue his role as Executive Chef at both Monk's Kettle locations and will cater the Rockridge menu to the neighborhood, including a complete kid's menu. "Once we establish operations, we plan to open early on Sundays and offer a brunch menu," he notes.

The restaurant features an open floor — creating one big great room for the bar and dining room. This includes 26+ seats at dining room tables, 14 bar stools, and ample standing room in the bar area. Additionally, there is a large back deck with roughly 26 seats featuring an in-ground lemon tree and an overhead trellis. The back deck has been weatherproofed for year-round use, including electric heat lamps.

Visit them at 5484 College Avenue. Reservations are accepted through OpenTable. ■

RCPC Land Use Committee

Get Involved and Stay in Touch with Oakland's General Plan Process

by Tom Lollini, FAIA, RCPC Board Member and Land Use Committee Chair

The City of Oakland is seeking your input on Phase 2 of the General Plan Update. The Oakland General Plan Update (GPU) is an exciting chance for everyone in Oakland to help plan the city's future for the next 20 years. Through the General Plan, the City aims to create livable and connected neighborhoods where people have access to everything they need, such as grocery stores, entertainment, shops, libraries, parks, safe transportation and necessary public facilities and infrastructure.

In 2023, the City of Oakland completed Phase 1 of the GPU, which included:

- Environmental Justice (EJ) Element (Oakland's first)
- Safety Element Update
- 2023-2031 Housing Element
- Phase 1 Planning Code Amendments
- Phase 1 Final Environmental Impact Report

This comprehensive policy package includes strategies to meet Oakland's housing needs and demands for more affordable homes, reduce pollution, advance environmental justice in the city's most impacted communities, and prepare to address the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

RCPC Land Use Committee Meeting

Next Meeting:
Wed., November 20, on Zoom

Meetings are held at 7:30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. **To participate, or to request links to this or any previous meeting, email** landuse@rockridge.org.

Phase 2 will address the following elements:

- **Land Use and Transportation Element (LUTE) Update**
- **Open Space, Conservation and Recreation (OSCAR) Element Update**
- **Noise Element Update**
- **(New) Infrastructure and Facilities Element**

The City of Oakland wants to hear from you about what our neighborhood needs! How should Oakland plan for housing and jobs? What should the City focus on to make transportation, parks, and recreation even better?

For further information and to stay current on other aspects of the process, tap the links below:

- GPU Framework and Guidling Principles
- Sign up for Email Updates

To access article links in blue, see the digital edition at Rockridge.org. ■

Planning Commission Votes to Advance CCA Project

The Oakland Planning Commission voted last month to advance the California College of the Arts (CCA) Project to the City Council including the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), a Final Development Plan, and Conditions of Approval.

The Conditions of Approval were modified slightly, and Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) recommended altering the project proposal's affordable housing obligation from 10 percent moderate-income units, which approximate current market rents, to 5 percent very low-income units, which are targeted to households with incomes 50 percent less than moderate-income units.

RCPC was also open to the city's determination as to whether it would prefer an "in-lieu fee," whereby instead of including affordable units within the CCA project, the developer contributes to the Oakland Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which uses those funds to help pay for building publicly-funded 100 percent affordable housing developments. However, RCPC expressed the preference to have these affordable units built in Rockridge.

According to the project developer, **Marc Babsin** of Emerald Fund, "We are continuing to pursue entitlements, and we hope to complete the entitlements process by the end of 2024. However, we will not be commencing construction until market conditions improve. We aim to break ground once that occurs."■

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JCCEB Project at Planning Commission on November 6

by Mark Aaronson, RCPC Board Member

The Jewish Community Center East Bay (JCCEB) application for planning permits authorizing new uses at the Dreyer's/Nestle site bounded by Claremont, College, and Chabot, is on the November 6th agenda of the Oakland Planning Commission. The starting time is 3pm at the Council Chambers in City Hall. The main items for decision are conditional use permits for civic community assembly and education uses, and approval of JCCEB's request for an Infill CEQA exemption.

Traffic and noise environmental studies have been done with recommended mitigation measures. The most noteworthy mitigation measures involve improvements at the College and Chabot intersection, which includes constructing a bulb-out at the northwest corner, installing Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons across both College crosswalks, and moving the College bus stops past the intersection. There are also traffic and parking mitigation measures for events attended by 220 peope or more.

On January 1, the JCCEB takes full ownership of the site. It has shared the site for almost three years with Nestle employees, mainly for office use, and five retail stores along College. The JCCEB intends to continue to lease the retail space for neighborhood-serving stores. Through a leasing agent, it is in negotiation with Crossroads to renew its lease, which expires in May.

The JCCEB will continue to operate programmatic and other activities at its existing north Berkeley campus. Its executive offices are now at the Dreyer's site, as are two residential programs for young adults in houses fronting Claremont Avenue.

The JCCEB's plans for the Dreyer's site include administrative office space for itself and up to 20 other mainly Jewish nonprofit service organizations; a weekday preschool childcare program for up to 120 children; educational and other programmatic activities for usually between 50 and 100 individuals, mostly no more than one each weeknight (except Friday evenings when there will be no programming); special programmatic and private events for up to 250 people, mostly on Saturday evenings and Sundays; and five Jewish High Holiday religious services and related events in September or October for an estimated 350 to 500 celebrants.

In addition, the JCCEB has included in the plans under review an after-school program for up to 100 students and a summer camp program for up to 200 children; however the JCCEB has not finally determined if or when these programs will become operational. While the site will not be used for major athletic activities, the submitted plans include proposed pickleball courts for the Claremont parking lot for use during non-business hours and non-programmatic times, and space for half-court basketball near the Chabot parking lot.

The entire site is almost three acres comprising 10 parcels, which will be merged into a single parcel with a Commercial Neighborhood-1 zoning designation. Proposed physical changes to the property involve the demolition of the large stairway entry off the Chabot parking lot to the second floor of the Dreyer's office building and its replacement with a ground floor entry area; the demolition of a breezeway extension to the old Yoshi's restaurant and club and the construction of an exterior deck on the south side of that space; a decrease of the overall number of onsite parking spaces from 140 to 91 mainly to create outdoor space for children play areas; and the installation of seven new pole-mounted lights in the Claremont parking lot and one new pole-mounted light in the Chabot parking lot.

RCPC and immediate Chabot Road neighbors have been in discussion with JCCEB representatives for more than two years over various impacts of the project. There is no final resolution yet to the issues discussed. In anticipation of the upcoming Planning Commission meeting, the RCPC Board has taken a position in general support of the project, but the specifics of how that position is framed are yet to be determined. ■





Rockridge Artists at East Bay Open Studios

Mixed media and collage artists, and Rockridge residents, Marsha Balian (www.marshabalian.com) and Katie McCann (www.katiemccannart.com) will be showing their work together at this year's Open Studios. Katie McCann is a self-taught English artist. Her work is a Victorian obsession with faeries, flora, and fauna. It is often lush and dense with hidden meaning and metaphors.

Visit Rockridge Artists

Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 7th & 8th; from 11am-5pm

Marsha Bailian & Katie McCann
at 5495 Kales Avenue
(also on Friday, Dec. 6th; 4pm-7pm)

Trina Anderson
5240 Shafter Avenue

Damon Manni
355 Glendale Avenue

Images below:
"Pink Moon" by Katie McCann
"Pelirrojo" by Marsha Balian





Martha Balian's work also has a strong narrative quality and incorporates found materials combined with drawing and painting. As a self-taught artist, she often invents her own techniques. Since invention doesn't require strict adherence to rules, her art avoids what might be overly literal and attempts to engage the imagination of the viewer.

Both artists were included in the book, *Collage by Women: 50 Women Collage Artists of the World,* which was published in Spain and has enjoyed huge international success. ■

Dogs (and sometimes, cats) of Rockridge

Hi, my name is Maki and we kitties demand equal time with doggies. I am the official greeter of the 5100 block of Shafter. I am easy to spot because I wear my bright pink vest outside. I am very friendly, so as you walk by, I might say hi and rub against your leg. If you have time, I'd love it if you could stop and give me a nice scritch between the ears… I'll be your friend for life.





Hudson (named for the Bay, a happy coincidence) is a rescue Golden Shepherd (golden retriever and German shepherd mix). He's 13-years-old, and his favorite person is whomever he's just met. He loves going to Cole Hardware to get a treat (that's where he is in this picture) while mom and dad shop. He recently transitioned to morning walks instead of evening walks, is particularly fond of kids, and has a *New Yorker* subscription in his name. He's fond of our neighborhood peacock, Kevin, whom he recognizes as a particularly colorful part of the pack.

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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eyes on Rockridge

Artist Goes from Digital to Old-School Calligraphy

by Judith Doner Berne

Jane Brenner's decorative calligraphy adorns the printed bookmarks honoring the San Francisco-based, 700-members of Friends of Calligraphy's 50th anniversary. In both Latin and English, it declares: "The spoken word vanishes, the written word remains."

Indeed, the 89-year-old Rockridge resident's studio is filled to the rafters with her versions of the written word, in English as well as Hebrew and Arabic. "I've just been asked to do a *ketubah* (Jewish wedding contract) in Hebrew, English, and Urdu," she said.

Brenner's work runs the gamut — from place cards, to commercial logos, to wedding invitations, to family trees — including two 2x7-foot wall mountings that traced the maternal and fraternal history for a well-known European family. A master's degree in painting from Ohio State University has equipped her to illustrate her calligraphy. "My goal is to help each client communicate appropriately, and yet perhaps in a way they hadn't thought of before," she said. "I trust the creative process to achieve something wonderful."



Photo by Judy Berne

Jane Brenner's calligraphic pieces can be found in museums as well as on kitchen walls.

Born in Columbus, Ohio, Brenner taught for a year at Fairmount State College in West Virginia, earning enough money to bicycle solo through Europe. Upon her return, a new friend from Mills College talked her into moving to the Bay Area.

"I walked into Wadsworth Publishing (then in San Francisco) and they hired me because I had spent one summer working at *Encyclopedia Britannica*," Brenner said.

"Wadsworth was where I learned about composition, typesetting, and book production. I worked with authors, I designed covers, I designed books." This was before the advent of computers.

Two events drew her out of the publishing world and into calligraphy: "I could see the importance of the computer," Brenner said. "I didn't want to be in front of a screen all day." That coincided with viewing Kalligraphia,

Brenner, see next page

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Brenner, from previous page

the Friends of Calligraphy triennial exhibit at the San Francisco Public Library. "I was intrigued."

"Working in publishing as a book designer gave me a good foundation for the gradual transition to working as a consultant to both public and private clients with diverse communication needs," Brenner said. "I enjoy the challenge of combining words and images to create distinctive and memorable designs that convey thoughts and emotions."

Lisa Kaplan discovered Brenner's work online a decade ago when she wanted to create a *ketubah* for her niece's wedding. Kaplan, the original volunteer coordinator for Rockridge's Frog Park, likes to mark graduations and significant birthdays for family and friends with framed quotations. "I've gone to Jane for those milestone gifts. We work together."

She is especially fond of a Brenner piece hanging on her kitchen wall. It reads: "The ordinary acts we practice every day at home are of more importance to the soul than their simplicity might suggest," a quote from Sir Thomas More. When Kaplan is making a meal or doing the dishes, "It helps me remember that ordinary acts are really important. I see that quote 20 times a day. I gave copies of it to my cooking group."

Brenner has exhibited at various galleries and museums, including the Sonoma Arts Council Gallery, Jewish Museum of San Francisco, Islamic Cultural Center of Oakland, and at Kalligraphia. She is a three-time winner of the Graceful Envelope contest, inaugurated by the Smithsonian Institute National Postal Museum.

Speaking of envelopes, one of her favorite assignments is addressing black envelopes using white ink for a Monterey winery. "I love it because it's white on black." Another unusual project was a recent request to letter a name on a soccer ball.

But family trees and *ketubot* require the most effort and imagination, she said. "Family trees shouldn't just be lineage. They should contain narrative material. They often take several months to complete." Many of the *ketubot* and wedding vow documents she designs include places for more than just the couple and witnesses to sign. "The Quakers require that everyone at the wedding sign. I like that tradition," she said.

Brenner, a widow, is surrounded by family. "I live within a five-mile radius of four siblings," two of whom live in Rockridge. (Stories on her sisters **Alice Erb** and **Susan Erb** appeared in the *Rockridge News* earlier this year.) And, son **Micah Brenner**, daughter-in-law **Stacey Wisnia**, and grandchildren **Anika**, 15, and **Ray**, 11, are also residents of Rockridge.

Brenner doesn't work as many hours as she used to, but says she is still agile with her pen and art. That is somewhat remarkable, said treasurer of the Friends of Calligraphy **Dean Robino**, since "It's not unusual for calligraphers to develop somewhat of a tremor. Jane has a very firm hand. Her work is really beautiful.

"She's one of our outstanding long-term members," Robino said, including stints as the organization's president, and then editor of its magazine, *Alphabet*, in the early 2000s. "Recently, Jane got me thinking about what the future of calligraphy should look like — what we can learn from digital type designers and what they can learn from calligraphers."

If you have a Rockridge-based story that needs telling, please email judyberne@att.net. ■







Rockridge Organizations Hold Joint Meeting on Measure NN

by Karen Ivy

Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) and the Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) held their annual joint meeting at the Rockridge Library on October 10. NCPC Secretary **Karen Ivy** began the meeting by highlighting recent statistics from the two most current crime reports (available at https://www.rockridgencpc.com). She noted that the bulk of crime in Rockridge is either auto-related property crime (thefts and burglaries) or general property crime (also thefts and burglaries, but not involving cars). Fortunately, "crimes against the person" are rare, particularly over the last two months.

Speaker **Anne Marks**, a volunteer Steering Committee member for the Measure NN campaign, presented the history of Oakland's property tax measures that have supported funding for additional policing. She explained that Measure NN was proposed as an extension and enhancement of Measure Z (due to expire this December) by a coalition of local residents, businesses, and nonprofits. Together, they gathered enough signatures to qualify the measure for this November's ballot.

In response to audience questions, Marks emphasized that the money dedicated to Prop NN is to be spent specifically on fire and policing — violence prevention; the improvement of emergency and 911 response times; and the prevention of sex trafficking.

The initiative would increase property taxes by a modest amount (from $133 to $198 for single-family homes); increase parking taxes at downtown lots by 10 percent; and require the City of Oakland to maintain a police force of at least 700 sworn officers. The full details of the measure are available at the Alameda County Registrar of Voters website.

The October 2024 minutes are available on the NCPC website at https://tinyurl.com/2etr5zmf. ■

NCPC Needs You

The Greater Rockridge NCPC was officially established in April 2002 to respond to the newly reorganized Community Policing Program of the City of Oakland Police Department. The organization has recently accepted the resignation of Vice Chair **Lisa Hingley**. They will miss her valuable contributions and ask Rockridge neighbors to consider spending a few hours every couple of months to participate in important, informative meetings. Interested parties can email chair@rockridgencpc.com. ■



Take A Seat and Change History

by Katrina Brekke-Miesner

Sometimes we only need to get started. This notion was at the heart of bringing back Performing Arts at Oakland Tech and renovating the auditorium. The idea back in 2004 was to raise money in order to save an after-school drama program run by Opera Piccolo. At a turkey dinner to raise the needed funds, a conversation ensued as to why Tech no longer offered drama or dance as in-school classes, and why there were limited music options. That night, parents vowed to raise money for performing arts. And they did.

The absence of an arts program had not only limited student options for a complete education, it allowed the auditorium to become storage for broken desks and debris. Unlike other classes, a performing arts curriculum needs a stage, sound system, lighting, and seats. The Auditorium Committee of parents, teachers, and administration identified a three-phase renovation plan.

Phase 1 (now completed) included simple things like mending curtains, getting dumpsters for clean-up days, and working with the Oakland Unified School District to address safety concerns. Understanding the need for a state-of-the-art facility, the committee sought experts to inform the staging of the plan. Despite a limited budget, the best in the field offered to help. For many, it was personal: "If it wasn't for performing arts, I wouldn't have graduated from high school."

Phase 2 (now completed) included installing a sound and lighting system, acoustic panels, and stage lighting.

Phase 3 (in progress) includes updating the seats, adding LED house lighting, paint, and carpet. Project management has been key, and back in 2006, **Daniel Brekke** (Rockridge resident and parent of three children who attended Chabot, Claremont, and Tech) took on the role of communicating with OUSD's facilities department,

Tech, see next page

Tech, from previous page

getting bids from vendors for lighting and sound, and overseeing the install.

The partnership with OUSD and in-kind support of local businesses, parents, and foundation funding were critical. Brekke explains, "Having volunteered to work on a number of school projects, I am amazed at the change parents can make with OUSD as a partner. With each improvement we would make, the students would literally say, 'Thank you.' My reply, 'We are doing this for you now with hopes you find ways to pay it forward too.'"

Today, this success is evident.



Photo by LaTisha Hernandez

Daniel Brekke and Amy Hood invite Rockridge residents to Take A Seat!

Rockridge resident, parent of a sophomore, and member of the Auditorium Fundraising Committee, **Amy Hood**, explains, "My daughter's involvement in the performing arts community at Tech, particularly the drama department, has been vital to her thriving as a high schooler. The high-caliber talent, both onstage and backstage, deserves a performance space that is an equally high-quality experience for the audience — our seating is the key."

Seeing the talent will be an experience to remember, and the seats will be too. You'll notice that they are broken and mismatched in color — not suprising as they were installed in 1959 when the building was first built. Help change this by sponsoring a seat for $250 and personalizing a plaque. This improvement will last for generations and make you part of Tech's history.

The Auditorium Committee has raised nearly $1 million of the $1.4M budget. This investment is more than a donation, it's recognizing the importance of student voices, community assets, and the role the arts play in our lives. Come Take A Seat, donate today at https://bit.ly/TakeASeatOT. ■

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# of Rockridge

La Esquinita: Breakfast Burrito

5701 College Avenue

La Esquinita, or as my kids call it "the pink taco shop," opened last year and immediately caught the attention of diners on College Avenue because of its unique paint job (the aforementioned all-pink aesthetic) and because of the variety of thoughtfully constructed tacos and burritos. The proprietor, **Thomas Schnetz**, is familiar to Oakland restaurant goers from Xolo and Doña Tomás — the latter of which moved to Piedmont Avenue (and is now called "Doña") after the apparent separation of Thomas and his wife **Dona Savitsky** (or that's what the gossip pages tell me).

My "Best Bite" at La Esquinita is the breakfast burrito with homemade chorizo. This can, and probably should be shared, given that it is enormous. Many Bay Area breakfast burritos get ruined by watery Pico de Gallo, but La Esquinita has avoided this pitfall, much to my delight. College Avenue lacked a great breakfast burrito in my humble opinion (informed by my New Mexican upbringing) and I, for one, believe La Esquinita has filled in the gap. The knock-on effect of La Esquinita is that Cactus recently has revamped and upgraded their menu. All of this is good news for those of us who live in Rockridge and have a proclivity for Mexican food — *buen provecho.* ■

— by Galen Wilson



Photo by Galen Wilson

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



Letters to the Editor

Change is Coming, Let's Collaborate

Dear Editor: I'm a long-time resident of Rockridge (36 years). When I think about the 5295 College Avenue project, two things come to mind: The housing crisis that exists in Rockridge; and that significant change is coming to our community as we work out solutions. The change may appear severe, as it should. Many of the letters to the editor last month reflect that reality. But crises warrant radically different ways of thinking about problems and solutions.

The solutions to the housing crisis should be focused on the key components of the problem: insufficient housing and unmanageable prices for both purchasing and renting. The solution lies in building more housing, specifically:

- Medium and high-density housing
- Housing with purchase and rental pricing across the affordability spectrum, from affordable to market rate
- Mixed-use development along College Avenue, where we mix residential with retail and commercial opportunities

The possible benefits to Rockridge are many, including:

- More people, resulting in a more vibrant community, specifically along College Ave.
- Greater diversity from the new availability of lower price point homes
- More vibrant retail community due to more potential customers
- Potentially greater safety — more eyes make it more difficult for crime to occur
- Greater support for our local schools due to increasing enrollment
- Finally, a likely contribution to a reduction in Oakland's homeless population

Now comes the hard stuff. The letters to the editor last month highlighted some of the problems we will see as new development occurs: greater height and density of buildings; legal non-conformance to some well-established building codes; increased traffic; and unwanted side effects like shading that will affect a small number of our neighbors. The new state laws around building housing — specifically affordable housing — can make the effects of these changes more severe.

I don't think we should focus on this project at this point. As the RCPC article, "Development Proposal at 5295 College Avenue" (September 2024) mentioned, it's likely to change and possibly not be built. Rather, I think we should take the long view. We know change is coming so let's get ahead of it. As mentioned by RCPC in the Rockridge News ("How New State Housing Laws Could Reshape Rockridge's Future," September 2024), we have the opportunity to work together to develop a plan that reflects the input of Rockridge residents.

Let's collaborate among ourselves and with developers so we become a place where the best and most creative developers want to build quality community-friendly housing. Then we will know what our community wants, and developers will know how to get it built. Take what I say as a mindset and a goal. It's not easy, but it sure beats failure. I see enough positives in the many letters to the editor to give me hope that we can do this.

Gary Barg
Chabot Road ■

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6 Offers!



348 GLENDALE AVENUE

This beautiful, bright and spacious 2-Bedroom Craftsman bungalow sold 33% over the list price in a shifting, inventory-intensive September market! This listing marks my 5th sale on this lovely single-block of Glendale Avenue – a small neighborhood community I have come to know and love.

Contact me if you are thinking of listing your Rockridge home!

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Letters, cont'd

Yes, to Affordable Housing — No to High Rises

Dear Editor: I am writing to address a matter of urgent concern for our community: The proposed 15-story highrise building at 5295 College Ave. While I wholeheartedly support the need for affordable housing, I must vehemently oppose this project as it is wholly inappropriate for the Rockridge district.

The idea of a massive highrise overshadowing our homes and businesses is simply outrageous. The character of our community is defined by its charming low-rise architecture and welcoming atmosphere. A 15-story building would dramatically alter that character, creating a visual and environmental impact that we simply cannot accept. Residents like myself fear that such a terrifyingly large structure would diminish property values and disrupt the quality of life for everyone in the neighborhood.

What is even more troubling is the fact that there has been absolutely no community input regarding this project. The builder has not engaged with residents nor sought feedback from those who would be most affected. This lack of outreach is unacceptable.

Community engagement is essential in any development process, and it is our right as residents to have a voice in decisions that will impact our lives and the future of our neighborhood. The current silence from the developer not only reflects an indifference to our community but also raises significant questions about transparency and accountability.

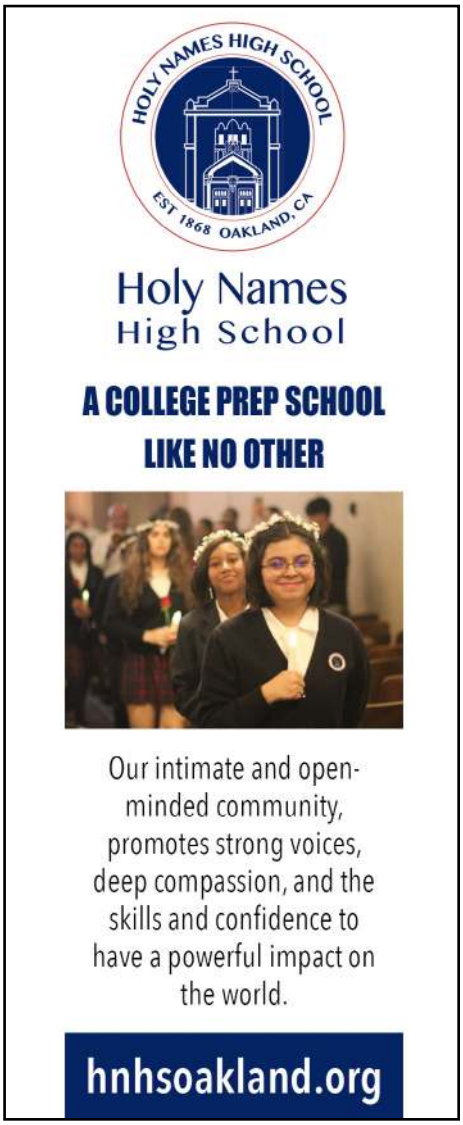
Furthermore, this proposal blatantly disregards existing zoning regulations. Our neighborhood has been carefully planned and developed over many years, with zoning laws established to reflect the community's needs and aspirations. Current zoning does not permit a building of this size and magnitude in Rockridge, and it is crucial that we strictly adhere to these guidelines. Allowing such a development would set a dangerous precedent, potentially opening the floodgates for future overdevelopment that could fundamentally change the fabric of our community.

It is imperative that the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) take a firm stand against this project. RCPC has a responsibility to represent community interests and promote thoughtful, sustainable development that aligns with the needs of residents. We need strong advocacy from our planning council to ensure that the voices of Rockridge residents are heard, and to oppose highrise developments that threaten our neighborhoods.

In conclusion, while affordable housing is a critical issue that we must address, the proposed building at 5295 College is not the answer. This project is an outrageously oversized proposal that has no place in our community. I urge my fellow residents and the RCPC to rally together and work towards preserving the character of Rockridge.

Joel Bloom
Clifton Street ■







Rockridge Library OCTOBER 2024 Events

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 every week.

Origami for All: Every third Tuesday at 4pm; 11/19. All ages welcome.

Tinker Tuesdays: Join us for various crafts for children every Tuesday at 4pm. All ages welcome, children under 8 must bring a grown-up.

For Teens ages 12 – 18

Movie Day: Wednesday 11/13 2-4pm: Join us for a fun movie, popcorn and drinks.

Teen Advisory Board: Wednesday, 11/13; 4-5pm. 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.

For Adults

Ask Your Area Home Experts: Every 2nd Friday, noon-2pm. Get answers, tips, 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.

Needlework Circle: every Thursday, 2-4pm. Bring your yarn and fiber arts projects to Rockridge Library. Build community, share your passion, learn, have fun!

1-on-1 Computer Help: Every Saturday, 10am-12pm. Do you need help with a password or your email or your phone? Come with your devices and technology questions and our volunteer tech guru will help you get sorted. First come first served.

Fall Meet the Author Series: Wednesday, 11/13, 6:30-7:30pm. Licensed Psychotherapist and leader in the global conversation about mental health and wellness, Rachel Kaplan will discuss her new book, *Feel, Heal and Let that Sh*t Go: Your Guide to Emotional Resilience and Lasting Self Love*. Kaplan will be signing copies of the book, available for purchase from A Great Good Place for Books. This event is sponsored by the Friends of the Rockridge Library.

Planting Bulbs - When and How: Saturday, 11/16, 2-3pm. The U.C. Master Gardener Program of Alameda County will teach the art of planting bulbs, rhizomes, and tubers for stunning spring displays.

ROCKRIDGE BOOK CLUB

Meets every 2nd Saturday, 3:30pm to 4:30pm at the library
November's book is *"Waiting to Be Arrested at Night,"* by Tahir Hamut Izgil.

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

Rockridge Library
5366 College Avenue at Manila
510-597-5017

Holiday Closures:
Veterans Day - November 11
Thanksgiving Day - November 28
Day After Thanksgiving - November 29

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

Please also check our online calendar at www.oaklandlibrary.org/events for events throughout the city.

Stroll the Avenue and Deliver the Rockridge News

by Susan Montauk, Rockridge News Distribution Manager

Many thanks to **Josh Aycock** (with help from his daughter, see photo) who has been delivering the newsletter to businesses along College Avenue. He is ready to pass the route on to someone who enjoys walks on the Avenue (and perhaps shopping along the way). In the past, volunteers have taken their kid(s) with them to do the hand-off, and the kids love it. With or without tiny volunteers, it's a wonderful way to serve your community — please contact us if you are interested.


Photo by Josh Aycock

Route CAv1: Businesses and apartments along College Avenue from Claremont Ave to BART. Stacks at various stores.

The route includes businesses and residences along the Avenue. You'll receive your bundles on the first Friday of each month (except for August). Call 510/547-3855, or email Susan at smontauk@gmail.com. ■





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 December's issue is: November 14, 2024 (available Dec 7).

User Manual for your dog?
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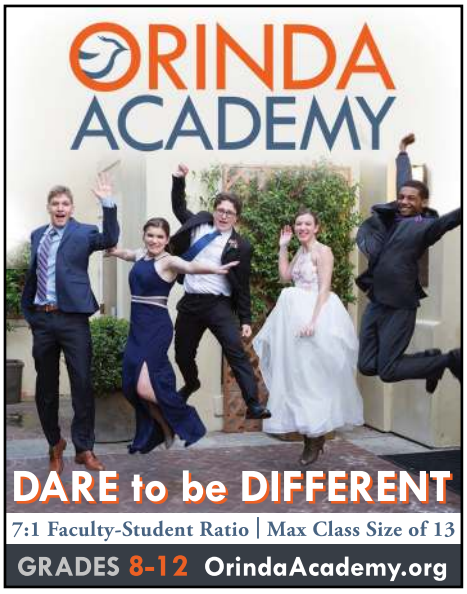
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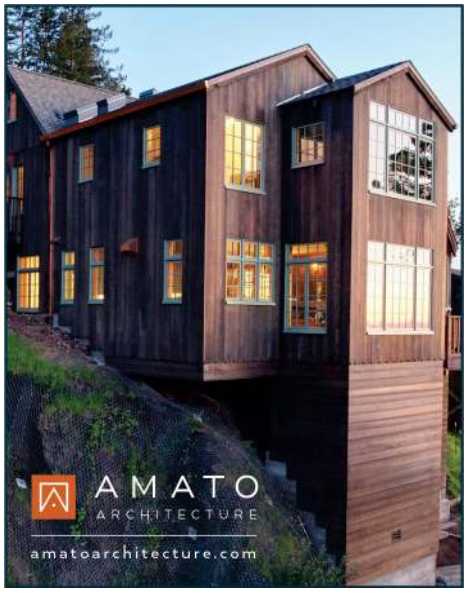
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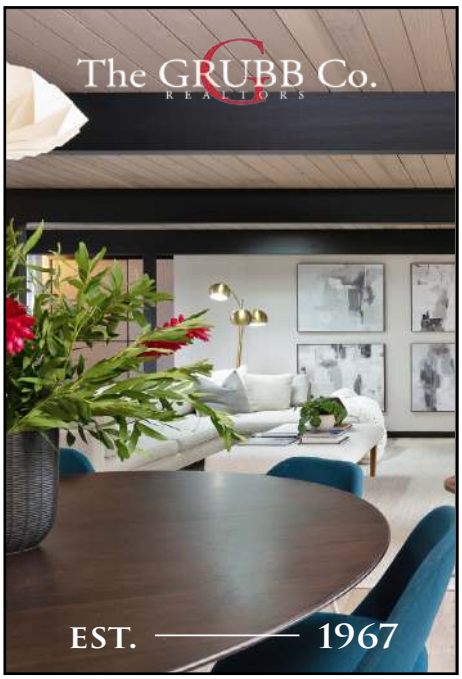
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