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Between Creeks and Hills: Indigenous Life in What We Call Rockridge

by Liam Pierce

Rockridge News "O" illustration by Linda Yamane



"Sculpture of Ohlone People," by Jennifer Riley; Photo by Maurice Ramirez

When Coyo Tena was 14, he was hesitant to join Sogorea Te' Land Trust's youth program, worried about putting too much on his plate his freshman year at Oakland Tech. But he eventually gave in to his mother's insistence, and his skepticism melted almost immediately.

With Sogorea Te', Tena developed a love of nature. He learned how to weave pouches out of salmon leather, identify plants and craft medicines, survived a tsunami warning on a kayak trip (long story) — and made many friends. Four years later, Tena, now 18 and a senior, earned an internship with Sogorea Te' this past summer.

"The main point of the youth program is to be in touch with the land — especially as Black and brown kids," said Tena, who is part Tejano and part Yaqui, from what is now Texas and Northern Mexico. "And to learn from what Ohlone peoples have been doing and how you can apply that to your daily modern life."

Sogorea Te' is an Ohlone- and women-led organization focused on returning Indigenous land and artifacts to Ohlone stewardship and revitalizing cultural practices in the East Bay. Rockridge lies within that territory — known as Huichin, ancestral land of the Chochenyo-speaking Lisjan, Muwekma and other unaffiliated Indigenous peoples. It is important to recognize whose land it was and whose land it still is.

Today, within the land that the Rockridge border fell on, there are few visible clues of the deep history

Ohlone Land, see page 4



Photo by Judith Doner Berne

Protest Muscle Memory: Seniors Reflect on a Lifetime of Showing Up

by Nancy Wright

At one point during the Oct. 18 No Kings Rally on Broadway, a man with a gray beard in an inflatable eagle costume started to reminisce on his time protesting grape sales at grocery stores in 1970. At the time, he was standing up for the dignity and wages of farm workers, but was met with counter-protestors who were "much less friendly" than the crew of mostly senior citizens assembled on that brisk fall Saturday.

The rally, situated near the intersection of Broadway and College Avenue, drew an early and lively crowd. The event was organized by Donald Goldmacher (profiled in our June 2025 edition), a resident of Merrill Gardens senior apartments, who founded it because the seniors of Rockridge wanted to protest but traveling downtown for them might have been difficult. Not to mention safety issues. And after starting last fall with only around 50 people, the Oct. 18 event was attended by nearly 1,000 people.

But by the time I arrived on the beat, wearing a bright blue sequined

Senior Protest, see next page

Senior Protest, from front page

fedora outfitted with a homemade "PRESS" card and red jacket, the crowd was already dispersing. Still, the conversations I had with neighbors heading home told a vivid story about how today's demonstrations felt to those who once filled the streets half a century ago.

(Note: Some participants are identified by first name only, per their personal preference for this story.)

"I love the panache of old people; I saw a woman with a lace collar and a sign that read 'We are Ruthless,'" said Peggy, laughing about the well-executed Justice Ginsberg pun. "The issues now feel broader, more global. One big difference is that today there was no marijuana on the bus!"

For Barbara, who once marched in Berkeley, New York and New Haven, the contrast was sharp. "It's absolutely different now," she said. "No tear gas!"

Alice, who demonstrated in Arkansas in the 1960s for civil rights, spoke more somberly. "Back then, Johnson was President, and I thought he was aligned with us," she said. "I don't feel that way now; it's scarier today."

Her younger friend, who joined her at the rally, added a warm memory: "I was a toddler back in 1969, but I'd ask, 'Mommy, where will we march today?'"

At 81 years old, I reflect back to the 1960's marches, protests and demonstrations. Born in 1944, I always felt that I was both at the forefront of some movements and a little late to others. I never attended a protest during those times — maybe out of concern for the consequences or just not being at the right place and time. But unprecedented times beckoned me to show up; this was my third protest this year.



Photo of the Author, Nancy Wright

On my way home, I popped into the nearby Wendy's to get a celebratory frosty and caught up with Tim and Mara, eating a meal with younger family members. They were heartened by the turnout.

"It's great that people our age are still enthusiastic," Tim said, pointing to his hat, emblazoned with the words "Chinga ICE," for me to photograph. "I talked to many veterans here today; they're upset at how things are going."

While the rally itself had dwindled from 1,000 to dozens of people by the time I arrived, the emotion lingered — an intergenerational echo of conviction, resilience and humor. What struck me most was how many of these elders carried both the muscle memory of protest and the wisdom of age. The tone may be calmer now — fewer chants, more conversation — but the resolve remains.

And one thing hasn't changed: community. Nearly everyone I interviewed, when they saw my "Rockridge News" badge, smiled and said, "I love that paper. It makes me feel like I'm part of something."

For me, too, this little assignment was a reminder of connection. That bright blue hat and "PRESS" sign opened up stories I wouldn't have heard otherwise — proof that curiosity, like protest, keeps us young. ■



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RCPC Partners Up for Local SNAP Relief, Will Match Donations

by Star Lightner, RCPC Vice Chair

You may have heard that the government shut-down put an end to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funding on Nov. 1. Even though the program has a $200 million reserve, the Trump administration is refusing to disperse those funds. This means that thousands of Alameda County residents, particularly children, will be harmed by the loss of food stamps that would normally have allowed them to continue purchasing food.

To help in this crisis, the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) is spearheading a food drive in Rockridge to benefit the Alameda County Community Food Bank and will match up to $2,000 in total donations. With your help, we can potentially raise $4,000 for the (Alameda County Community) Food Bank.

The drive runs Nov. 6–Dec. 8 and will be both virtual and in person. If donating in person, you can bring any type of nonperishable food. Items such as canned meats, peanut butter, mac and cheese, soups, dry beans and rice, canned fruits and vegetables, cereal and granola bars are in particularly high demand.

For in-person donations, RCPC has enlisted three fantastic partners to help make this effort possible; Market Hall, the Rockridge Library and Claremont Middle School will each be hosting a Food Bank barrel. The Market Hall barrel will be located at the College Avenue entrance near the new cheese counter and the bakery, the Rockridge Library barrel will be in the front lobby and the Claremont Middle School barrel will be just inside the main entrance at the corner of College Avenue and Miles Avenue. In addition, a fourth wonderful partner, Trader Joe's, is kickstarting the action with a donation of $100 worth of nonperishable food items.

RCPC Donate to Support Families Who Were Denied SNAP

donate.accfb.org/vfd/RockridgeGives

The virtual food drive will allow you to donate funds directly to the Food Bank — with the added benefit of being tax deductible. Direct donations are particularly helpful because they allow the Food Bank to buy in bulk for economies of scale.

Here is what the Alameda County Community Food Bank says about the current government shut down and SNAP cuts:

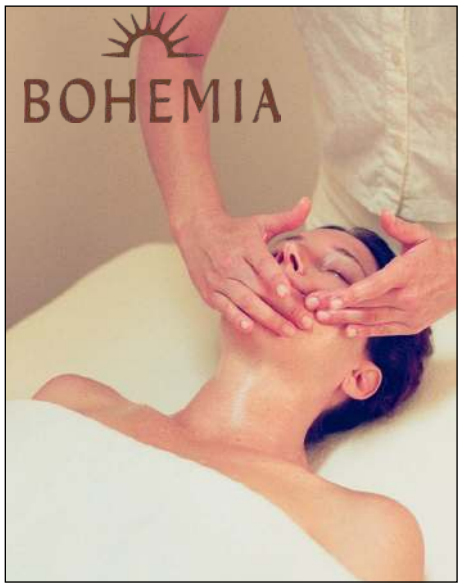
"During the last shutdown we supported approximately 1,200 federal employees — including TSA, Coast Guard, FBP and IRS — with regular deliveries of healthy nonperishables and bags of fresh produce, directly to their places of employment. It was our goal then and is our goal now to ensure they have the most convenient access to nourishment.

Spikes in hunger like this, however temporary, mean more reliance on food banks for families to meet their basic needs. As an emergency response organization, we remain prepared to help in these times, and that requires tapping into our reserves at a time when we're already deficit spending."

The barrels were delivered to our partner locations the week of Nov. 6 and the virtual food drive is live, so you can get started right away! Please be generous so we can help alleviate hunger in Oakland during these trying times. ■









Ohlone Land, from front page

beneath the neighborhood's sidewalks, shops and tree-lined streets. This absence itself tells a story of intentional erasure since European contact, lack of artifacts or lack of searching. But there is a story to be told in the absence of Indigenous findings in Rockridge — and the information that surrounds its borders.

Imagine Rockridge not as an assemblage of property lines, but as a dynamic, living ecosystem. Following seasonal logic, families moved inland from the warmer, abundant bayshore shellmounds in the winter to tule and brush homes in the oak-rich foothills during warmer months. This was a site of sustained residency and specialized cultural practice.

The rhythm of life was symbiotic, driven by the specialized labor of the community. The Ohlone diet was anchored in the acorn, harvested from oak woodlands and typically processed by skilled women. They would pound and leach the meal with water to remove bitter tannins, transforming it into nourishing porridge, soup, bread or cakes. The woods, marshes, and creek meadows of the Rockridge territory were an open pantry of seeds, berries and bulbs.

"Imagine the redwood trees here being as tall as the ones up north," said Francis Mendoza of the East Bay Regional Park District, referring to vast, fog-fed forests east of Rockridge. "Ohlone would use the redwood leaves as a natural water break in creeks to filter the bitter tannins out of acorn meal, adding a subtle flavor."

Mendoza noted that like the oak woodlands that were Rockridge, the towering redwoods were considered to be elders, reflecting the belief that animals and plants were part of their family, their relatives.

Men, through patient observation and expert knowledge, hunted deer and elk with sculpted bows in the higher hills, utilizing sophisticated decoys and mimicking animal gait — a practice that required deep understanding of animal behavior.

Children contributed to both men's and women's roles, learning every hill and plant by name, inheriting an understanding of the world where the spiritual was interwoven with the physical.

While labor was often divided along lines of gender, the Ohlone didn't ascribe to rigid gender binaries. They acknowledged and accepted individuals with "Two-Spirit" identities. Two-Spirit individuals often held special valued spiritual, social and labor roles within the tribe, effectively bridging traditional divisions of work.

But how do we know that this is what life was like within the Rockridge border? Well, we don't for sure.

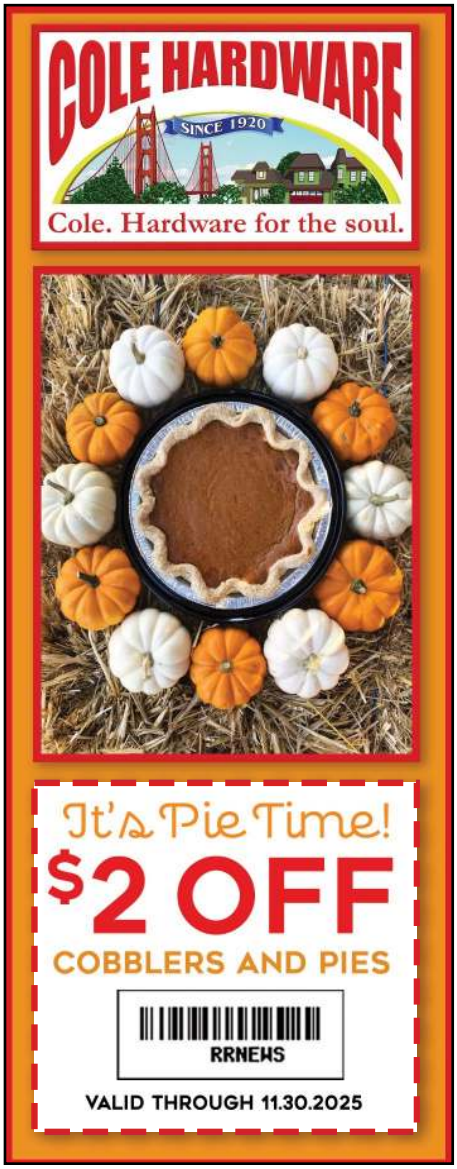
In the Oakland History Room, a 1910 Rockridge Gazette celebrates "the first house built there" 150 years ago, ignoring the thousands of years of tule and redwood dwellings that likely stood on this soil. The Rockridge BART foundation was unearthed in the late 1960s with no legal requirements for archaeological surveys.

Local property owner John Allen hasn't found any artifacts on his properties, but is currently working with two tribes using subsurface radar to detect if there are any artifacts below his property at 5299 College Ave.

"How would you feel if somebody dug into your grandmother's grave?" Allen said, adding he was happy to comply.

But the absence of recorded history (so far) doesn't mean nothing was here; Rockridge is surrounded by evidence.

Three widely known sites frame the neighborhood — and reveal why Rockridge's land was significant. To the west stood one of the great shellmounds, which was largely destroyed



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to make Bay Street Emeryville shopping center.

To the northwest, another shellmound near the I-80 University Ave. exit was successfully returned to Sogorea Te' stewardship in May 2024.

These shellmounds suggest that Ohlone communities followed creeks from there, eastward for springtime migration. One path likely followed Temescal Creek, which still flows mostly underground beneath Highway 24 and the BART station. And where there was water, there were Ohlone.

The third known site sits at the boundary between Rockridge and Temescal, east of 51st and Telegraph. The word "Temescal" is a Spanish distortion of the Nahuatl word for sweat house, a central place of ceremony, suggesting a permanent village nearby.

While describing Ohlone life is susceptible to overly romantic imaginings, we should acknowledge the violent interruption to that life that came in waves. Spanish missions forced relocations and sterilized Ohlone. Mexican secularization dissolved land holdings. Under U.S. rule, the Gold Rush brought state-sanctioned genocide at $5 per severed Ohlone head. Shellmounds became construction fill. Sacred objects were taken by private collections and museums.

Then development: roads, homes, rail lines, tunnels. If history is what we choose to preserve, erasure is what we choose not to see.

For Tena, the program was a reminder that Indigenous peoples in the Bay Area aren't just sepia-toned museum displays. They are here today — still connected to the land, still shaping it and still reclaiming their place in it.

"Learning Native history in school was great, but it was always in the past tense," Tena said. "I was like, 'what the heck? I'm still here.'"

And despite generations of efforts to bury that past since European contact, Ohlone descendants remain. Sogorea Te', led by Tribal Chairwoman Corrina Gould, and their goal to rematriate the land is a testament to that.

Even if we never uncover a perfectly preserved village beneath Rockridge, we know this land was and is lived on, cared for and shaped by Ohlone people. That history isn't gone; it's being reclaimed. Everyone in Rockridge has the opportunity to support that work, to honor the original and current stewards of the land, and to help bring its full history into view. ■

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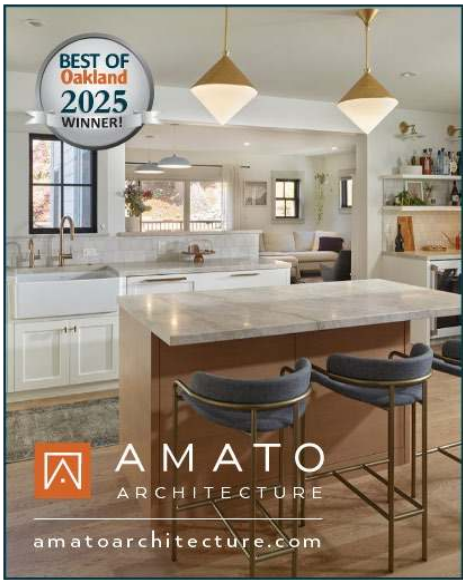

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Help College Avenue Presbyterian Church Hand Out Thanksgiving Meals to Those in Need

by Rev. Monte McClain

For nearly 50 years, the College Avenue Presbyterian Church community has been partnering with you, the greater Rockridge community, to host an annual free Thanksgiving Day community meal.

This year, with your help, we are hoping to provide 250 to-go meals on Thanksgiving Day for people in need. The event will take place on November 27 from 11 a.m.–noon from our campus at 5951 College Avenue.

We invite you to take part in this diverse community effort, a collaboration among congregational members, local merchants and Rockridge residents. While we can't solve all the housing and food-insecurity problems of our town, together we can respond to the needs of those struggling with hunger, solitude, joblessness or economic pressures.

Partner with us to provide 200 Turkey Meals for our neighbors at Thanksgiving.
COLLEGE AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
capcoakland.org



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

You can also give the gift of your time. We need plenty of volunteers to help in our effort to provide this holiday meal. We're looking for people who can help by cooking at home, preparing the site, serving and cleaning up — all done in a spirit of joy and giving while paying the utmost attention to safety measures. We also gladly welcome the help of children accompanied by a parent.

To donate your money and time, visit the Thanksgiving Meal page on the church website at capcoakland.org/thanksgiving-meal. There, you can sign up for a volunteer slot or make a safe and secure electronic donation. Contact the church office at capcoakland@gmail.com or (510) 658-3665.

Thank you for partnering with us to respond to the hungers of Oakland! ■

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Photos: The Halloween Parade Had Plenty of Tricks and Treats for All

Photos by Robbie Tasker and Liam Pierce



The Rockridge Halloween Parade is co-sponsored by Rockridge Community Planning Council, Rockridge District Association, the Rockridge Library and Friends of the Rockridge Library.

Safer Rockridge Expands Patrol Coverage

by Diana Calla, Safer Rockrdige Secretary & Acting Treasurer

Safer Rockridge, the local non-profit that organizes and funds the neighborhood's private security service, is excited to announce that on Nov. 1 it began a pilot expansion program. For the next three months there will be two cars on duty in the evenings, Wednesday–Saturday, which meaningfully increases the patrol presence during these key hours.

Safer Rockridge has been working towards this goal for several months.

"Expanding the patrols has been on our roadmap for a while, but recently we have observed a noticeable uptick in residential break-ins, so we felt the time was right," said Chris Shayne, Safer Rockridge Board President.

The timing of the pilot is set to coincide with the holiday season, when there is an increase in packages being delivered (and potentially, lingering on stoops) and when it gets dark earlier in the evening. Safer Rockridge is also exploring a partnership with the Rockridge District Association to ensure there is additional patrol coverage during December evenings focused on College Avenue.

The expanded patrols are only planned for three months, as the program will be paid for using Safer Rockridge's limited reserves. The patrol service is funded entirely by contributions from community members, most commonly $30 per month. In order to continue offering expanded patrols beyond the three-month pilot, Safer Rockridge will need more regular, recurring contributions to cover the increased cost of the second car and additional patrol hours.

Currently, Safer Rockridge has around 200 monthly subscribers, but the neighborhood has over 5,000 addresses. This works out to a contribution rate of less than five percent. The Safer Rockridge board expects that if that rate increased to ten percent, it would be feasible to maintain a second car indefinitely and increase the hours, too.

Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council

Next NCPC Meeting Date:
Thursday, Dec. 11, 7p.m.
Rockridge Library conference room
Zoom link: tinyurl.com/274syffw

For our December speaker, we have a representative from Safer Rockridge, a California non-profit public benefit corporation that pools contributions from area residents and businesses to provide professional, unarmed security in Lower Rockridge.

Safer Rockridge's website, saferrockridge.org, has information about how to contribute or modify an existing recurring contribution. Also, the board is currently looking to add a Treasurer. Please email saferrockridge@gmail.com if you are interested in volunteering or learning more. ■

ROCKRIDGE DENTAL

Beloved Death Blooming Agave's Notebook Stolen, But Its Story Lives On

by Jana Good and Casey Farmer, RCPC Board Member and Chair



Ironically, a death blooming agave plant has brought plenty of life to Manila Avenue. It has captured the hearts of residents — even tourists from as far away as New Zealand — in a remarkable way. As the plant grew to its current height of 30 feet, so did the notebook that documented its admirers, racking up hundreds of stories and reflections from neighbors and visitors.

But sadly, the notebook, which was kept out front alongside the plant, was stolen on September 25 — the same evening that a rock was thrown through a window next door.

"The notebook is invaluable," said Brion Spensieri, the owner of the agave. "It means the world to us; I've never felt so connected to my community."

Spensieri and his family documented the story of their century plant agave's death bloom on a small easel outside their home, just around the corner from the Rockridge Library. When Spensieri and his wife bought their home in 2017, the plant was just 5 feet tall. But in May of this year, as part of the death bloom process, a stalk grew from the center and has since reached over 30 feet tall. The plant is about 33 years old, per aerial photos located by Spensieri's geologist neighbor.

The plant is an agave americana, from the asparagaceae family, and the bloom definitely resembles its edible cousin, the asparagus. The once-in-a-lifetime flowering event is a "pollinator's dream," Spensieri said. He also notes that at peak bloom, the yellow flowers of the seed pods produce a nectar that attracts hummingbirds, bees and butterflies.

Initially, Spensieri put the easel out to explain what the plant was going through for guests at an Easter party they were throwing. After the party, he decided to leave it outside for neighbors to learn too and throughout each step of the plant's death bloom process, he explained the science of what was happening to it on the easel.

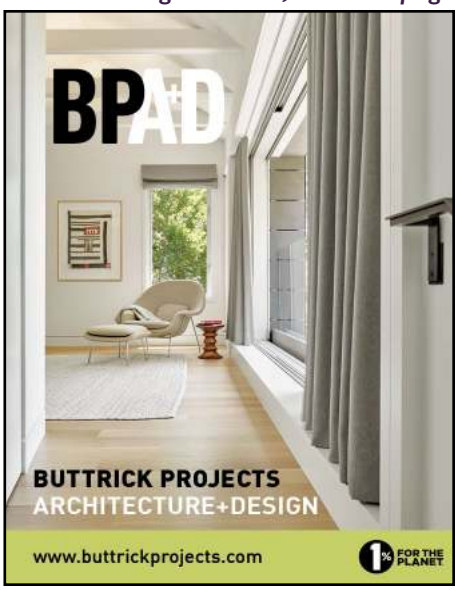
But when people began signing their names and jotting down encouraging words on the white board, Spensieri decided to put out a school composition book for the community to share their reflections. Early entries include drawings of the plant, "love notes" thanking the plant for its beauty, and even poems of reverence.

Over time, visitors began writing more personal reflections in the notebook, sharing their thoughts on the grace and dignity of the agave or, in the face of losing a recent family member, reflections on the catharsis of seeing death as a dynamic process. The first notebook filled up within just two weeks, so a second was taped to it and then a third. In total, there were hundreds of pages of positive and heartwarming comments.

"A city like Oakland can feel very

Agave Its All, see next page






Photos by Brion Spensieri, Illustration by Liam Pierce

Agave Its All, from previous page

city-y or very neighbhorhood-y," Spensieri said, noting that the neighbors of his previous home in San Francisco weren't quite as warm as those in Rockridge. "And this really turned the corner for me; I feel like I've got people here now."

Spensieri said that nowadays, he can't even go to the mailbox without getting stopped to talk about the plant. His children, ages 6 and 4, love waving from their second story bay window at those who stop to observe the plant.

Neighbor Matty Easton made the plant "internet famous" through his robust posts on Instagram, TikTok and Facebook. Across all platforms, the plant has nearly 10 million views and has generated overwhelmingly positive comments. The online buzz prompted CBS News to do a segment on the plant's impact on the community on May 29. Tourists visiting San Francisco say they went out of their way to visit the plant.

Spensieri asked fans and followers to recommend names for the agave and hundreds were submitted. Suggestions included Spike, Robert Plant, Tequila, Mamagave and Expira-gus. But Audrey, a nod to the plant in the musical "Little Shop of Horrors," received the most number of votes.

"Apparently there is a huge crossover between plant people and theater people," Spensieri said.

Audrey doesn't need much maintenance or water. Spensieri's gardener cuts back the lower leaves when they extend beyond the sidewalk, primarily to prevent poking any passerbys. And Spensieri believes the pruning actually stimulated her growth.

Spensieri documented Audrey's growth using a laser tape measurer and subtracted a few inches to account for its leaning nature. As of October 10, Spensieri believes it has stopped growing as no new bulbs have formed atop the plant.

Fittingly, Spensieri believes Audrey is a female due to her ability to make babies — and a lot of them! The bloom has produced over 1000 seeds, which are all genetically unique. When the seed pods fall from the bloom, Spensieri's children help collect them, leave them out to dry for a few days and then make them available in a box next to the easel. Many online followers requested the seeds and Spensieri has mailed them — as far away as Honolulu and Connecticut.

He reports that she is growing weaker but that it's not possible to predict when she will die. Spensieri plans to replace Audrey with one of her clones, called pups, when she completes her death bloom.

Inspired to teach young people about finding beauty in death, Spensieri hopes to write a children's book about Audrey.

"I want to celebrate all that she gives back, to honor how hard she works — to display how interdependent her bloom is on other plants in the vicinity that are undergoing the same evolution at the same time." Spensieri said. "And to express how fascinating it is that this botanical process endlessly repeats itself." ■

HELP FIND THE NOTEBOOK

Please keep an eye out for three black composition notebooks taped together, with a wide array of reflections and drawings of beloved Audrey. If found, please return to the home on Manila Avenue — no questions asked!



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Lactose Highs at the Cruccolo Parade

by Galen Wilson

If you happened to walk down Shafter Avenue near Market Hall at almost precisely noon on a recent, damp Saturday, you may have seen a 366-pound wheel of Italian cheese being paraded down the street. Accompanying it were festively dressed cheesemongers, an accordion player and plenty of fanfare from dozens of delighted neighborhood onlookers. But to call it an unusual sight wouldn't be exactly correct; in fact, Oct. 25 marked the 10th Crucolo Parade.

In case you've been sleeping under a wheel of cheese for the last 10 years, Crucolo is a coveted cheese from the Trentino-Alto Adige region of Italy. And Market Hall's cheese counter is one of only two shops in the U.S. (the other is in Concord, Massachusetts) where cheese enthusiasts can find this delicious cow's milk cheese.

In taste, it's almost as if pecorino romano and brie had a love child — with a room temperature texture like refrigerated butter. And after letting the Cruccolo sit on the tongue, it finishes with a faintly numbing tingle.

Part of what makes the Crucolo Parade such a spectacle is the sheer size of the wheel. Roughly, it measured a whopping three feet in diameter and two feet high. And unless the volume equation has changed since I was in middle school 100 years ago, this thing clocks in at nearly 25,000 cubic inches. The wheel is shipped by boat from Italy to New York and then immediately transported by truck to Oakland.

Alma Avalos, Market Hall's principal cheese buyer since 1998, was "looking for something amazing and different" at a 2008 food show in New York. When she saw the giant wheel of cheese, she said, "I want that cheese right now."

Ms. Avalos's enthusiasm for the event and the cheese is palpable as she hands out samples and answers questions — all while dressed in traditional Italian garb. Last year, she traveled to Italy to pick out the specific wheel herself. She noted that after last year's parade, they sold the nearly 400-pound block in one week. Alvalos anticipates it will sell even faster this year; one cashier estimated that hundreds of people bought a chunk of Cruccolo on the first day.

The cheese is so popular that no restaurants or individuals receive special consideration — it's available on a first-come, first-served basis. On parade day, other shops in Market Hall collaborate by serving Italian-themed foods and samples (biscotti at the bakery, Italian vino at Paul Marcus Wines).

The Cruccolo is enjoying even more real estate than last year. Highwire Coffee, which used to operate in the front corner facing College Avenue, has moved to its own space next door, making way for the relocation and expansion of the cheese counter.

Photos by Galen Wilson



A gentleman — understandably — admires the Cruccolo in all of its glory.

In prior years, the parade was held mostly outside, but due to a light drizzle and the fact that the cheese counter now offers much more indoor space, this year's celebration took place both inside and out. After the wheel was carted into its destination, cheesemongers cut and processed the massive wheel into smaller blocks for sale at the adjacent new cheese counter.

If you missed the Crucolo Parade this year, I highly recommend putting a reminder on your calendar for late October 2026. In many ways, it represents the best of Rockridge: community, tradition, fun and cheese. Don't forget the cheese. ■

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BEST BITES

Saffron Celebrates Its Second Anniversary

by Christine Garofoli



Photos provided by Saffron Kitchen

Saffron Kitchen has one of the most exciting menus on College Avenue. Since they opened two years ago this month, Saffron became my go-to spot for a cozy dinner for two or to impress newcomers with Mediterranean-Infused Afghan cuisine. And it always wows.

Akbar Arghandiwal and Abdul Yawary are the warm brother-team of chefs who opened Saffron and set the restaurant's friendly tone and inviting atmosphere. You can often find them floating around the dining room, welcoming guests and helping deliver meals.

Seating choices allow guests to eat outside under the covered terrace or inside the large open dining room at white tableclothed tables, where they can listen to soft Mediterranean music playing in the background.

My menu favorite on the menu is their mantus: steamed dumplings filled with spiced ground meat and onions. What takes them over the top is the unforgettable yogurt-mixed vegetable sauce that is tangy and refreshing with just the right amount of mint. The aushak, or Afghan leek dumplings, are equally fabulous and can be served with or without meat sauce.

Saffron is loved for their high-quality meat options like kabobs made with filet mignon beef and lamb tenderloin. Their oven roasted lamb shank (qabuli pallaw), cooked to perfection with fall-off-the-bone meat, is mixed with their signature basmati rice and three sauce options.

Vegetarians will find plenty to love too. The cauliflower qurma, a slow-cooked stew with onion, ginger and tomato, was a table favorite and paired beautifully with saffron basmati rice and butternut squash.

It's a great place for bigger groups, as they can accommodate a diverse range of eaters — vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free and meat eaters can choose from a variety of flavorful Afghan options. Their spice mixtures fit all diets and complement the food tremendously.

They have a signature cocktail list that features specials like the "Not Forgotten" — a unique blend of gin, lemon and orange flower — as well as a variety of local microbrewery beers and wines from their extensive list served by their attentive bartender. For dessert, either their signature saffron pistachio or pomegranate chocolate gelatos are a perfect way to end the meal.

During their anniversary week of November 1–11, if you say "happy anniversary" to your waiter, you can enjoy a complimentary glass of champagne with your meal. But more impressive: throughout the whole month of November, 10% of their lunch proceeds will be donated to Claremont Middle School, where they are looking to develop an ongoing supportive partnership.

Whether you're seeking adventurous dishes, a generous happy hour with unique Afghani flavors or a warm place that brings people together, Saffron Kitchen has become a Rockridge gem worth returning to again and again. ■

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Hi,

I have been owning a home and living in Rockridge for 55 years. RCPC did not exist when I moved here. I enjoy reading Rockridge News and like its editorial independence from RCPC. I have no complaints against the editors. The firing by RCPC is extremely disturbing news to me. Is RCPC now influenced by MAGA Republicans? Why else would any organization do this without disclosing the reasons for such a major decision? What have the editors done? Did the majority of the readers lodge any complaints against the editors? Please publish those complaints.

RCPC must reinstate the editors and present its grievances against the editors to the community at large. Put it to a vote in the democratic way. I smell politics of the MAGA kind. You are doing exactly the same thing Trump is doing in Washington. You should publish this letter to the next issue. Hopefully, by then you will reinstate the editors you so wrongfully fired.

– Som Konar
Broadway and College area resident

As you may know, the Rockridge Community Planning Council Board recently concluded its contract with the editor of the Rockridge News. We recognize that this has raised some concerns

It was a difficult decision for the Board and one that was arrived at after multiple efforts to address challenges. In the end, we felt this action was necessary to ensure our continued ability to deliver the quality content and diverse views that our community values. We would like to express our appreciation for Anna Marks' contributions to the content and the look of the Rockridge News, and we wish her well.

RCPC remains deeply committed to sharing the stories of our neighborhood, reporting on important local events, and providing a platform for a wide range of perspectives. We believe that new leadership at the Rockridge News will strengthen that commitment and bring a level of professionalism that supports the volunteer board in continuing to serve our community.

We welcome your feedback on content you would like to see in the News.

(Please send to info@rockridge.org)

Sincerely,

The RCPC Board of Directors

Rockridge

To honor RCPC's 40th anniversary, we're looking for input on our Rockridge logo.

We're curious whether the the current, iconic craftsman home logo adequately reflects who we are today.

Do you have an idea for a different logo or do you think the craftsman home best represents our community? Are there other elements you'd like to see incorporated?

Learn more and share your thoughts by **December 5, 2025** by emailing logo@rockridge.org.

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Dogs of Rockridge



Yumi (4) is a sweet, curious Australian cattle dog (though she may have some kinda mix going on), who was adopted shortly after her pawrents got engaged two months ago. Her copious energy is satiated by her daily trips to her new dad's work at a golf course in San Francisco. There, she stares down her mortal foe: the leafblower. When in Rockridge, Yumi loves to stroll to (watch her owners) get coffee at High Wire.



The dynamic duo of Lola (Berger Picard) and Bug (Sheltie) have been dating and romping around Rockridge for the last seven years. They frequent local eateries on College Avenue and have many admirers, with particular love given to and from the youth at Chabot Elementary. Their favorite activity is walking from Rockridge to Cal in the mornings with their moms.

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

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Letter From the Editor: Hello Again, Rockridge

By Liam Pierce

Growing up in Oakland, I always thought of Rockridge as a magical place. Even when I bend down to look at Market Hall's pastries, I can't replicate the feeling of viewing them at eye-level like I did as a young child. Later, as an elementary schooler, I was introduced to my love of jazz at Yoshi's, back when it was on Claremont Avenue — I even made it my annual birthday dinner.

As a pre-teen, my blood type was classified as "Zachary's" after maybe too many trips there as a kid (I always wanted to win that poster contest but never entered). As a teen, I'd spend the early part of my Thanksgiving Day at the College Avenue Presbyterian Church, handing out meals, getting to know our neighbors.

In high school, when I'd commute into the city, Rockridge BART station was the beginning of me being lamentably pulled into the San Francisco fog; I longed for my return to Rockridge each evening. (Why didn't I go to school in Oakland, where it's always 20 degrees warmer?)

When I was back from college for Christmas, I remember making Pegasus Books my desperate, last-second shopping spot just to pretend how 'worldly' I had become. (I hadn't.)

Oddly enough, despite Rockridge being in my DNA, I'm the new guy here. I hadn't lived in Oakland in 20 years — until I moved back two years ago. I lived in New York, where I published an article in the Times about being a gondolier in Central Park (thanks to my Lake Merritt training) and later became a staff writer at Vice.



Editor photo provided so you can argue with him about Oxford commas or whatever.

Photo by Julie Bernas-Pierce

I also lived in New Orleans — a city deeply connected to Oakland by way of the Great Migration — where I was a crime reporter at the Times-Picayune. Most recently, I ran a nonprofit that elevated BIPOC/LGBTQ+ high schoolers' voices with journalism, helping my students get published in the likes of Teen Vogue and Business Insider, covering issues such as: gender-fluid fashion, environmental racism and abortion rights in the South.

There's one thing I'd teach my students in the first week of class: that the two best types of journalists are: 1. Someone who knows everything about the topic they're covering. And 2. Someone who knows absolutely nothing about the topic they're covering. Because asking even the most obvious question can yield a completely unique and revealing answer.

I sit in a kind of cozy in-between in regards to Rockridge. I know its past and am extremely curious about its present. And now I'm deeply invested in its future. I have a lot of questions I need to ask about the place. And because of that, I'm intent on learning from the people who know it best: you.

Let's take a quick moment to appreciate what Rockridge News is: a rarity in the media world, where people say print and journalism are dying. What a delight! There are roughly 10,000 words between the first and last page of this publication that we get to define for ourselves, a living record of this cozy little hamlet nestled in the crook of the Oakland Hills.

I thought I'd start my brief *interim tenure in two ways. First, by asking about Rockridge's very beginning: who inhabited the land before we did. Because, amidst squabbles over land use — whether affordable housing should go here or there or nowhere or be this or that tall — it's important to remember whose land it is: all of ours. And that we should do our best to honor and share it with each other.

And second, by looking into Rockridge's future. I recently visited an Oakland Tech class where they make their own newspaper, The Scribe, that has a history much older than this paper — dating back to WWI. There, I asked students to contribute stories about Rockridge to this publication — stories that pique their curiosity as young people. Because while the people who have lived here their entire lives make for very good journalists based on their knowledge of All Things Rockridge, sometimes it's the reporters who know absolutely nothing about Rockridge that can discover something entirely new.

Either old or new — whether you're bending over to view the pastries or are gazing at them, slack-jawed, at eye-level — there's plenty of magic in Rockridge to go around. I can't wait to discover it with you. ■

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Storytime: Thursdays and Saturdays; 10:30 am.

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

Read to a Dog: Thursdays; 4 pm. Practice reading aloud with Gladys the dog.

Craft Programs: MoChA at the Library! Thursday, 11/20, 3:30 pm. Monthly art workshops for children and families led by teachers from the Museum of Children's Art. For ages 5-15 and caregivers. Build creativity, social-emotional & academic skills through art.

Making Stories Club: Thursday, 11/6 & 12/4; 3:30 pm. Monthly workshop to write, illustrate, and tell stories. Make books, zines, stories, comics, kamishibai, or plays! Join this club of youth writers and illustrators. For ages 8 to 12.

For Adults

Ask Your Area Home Experts: Every 2nd Friday, 12:00-2:00. 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.

Rockridge Book Club: every 2nd Saturday, 3:30-4:30. Please call 510-597-5017 for more info and to get a copy of the book. November's book is "The Sentence," by Louise Erdrich.

Needlework Circle: every Thursday, 1-3pm. Bring your yarn and fiber arts projects to Rockridge Library. Build community, share your passion, learn and have fun!

Artist's Open Studio: every 3rd Tuesday, 2-4:30pm.

1-on-1 Technology Help: every Saturday, 10am-12pm and 1-3pm, Tuesdays 5:30-7:30 and Wednesdays 5:30-7:30. Come with your devices and technology questions and our volunteer tech guru will help you get sorted. Signup recommended.

Adult Crafting Series: Tuesday Nov. 4th, 6-7:30pm. Collaborative Painting with lellobird. Come join this fun community-building exercise. Everyone will get to take home an artwork or two made by the entire group.

This is for You: Gift-Giving as a Way of Life. Books will be sold onsite by A Great Good Place for Books. This program is sponsored by the Friends of the Rockridge Library.

Rockridge Gardening Series: Saturday November 15th, 2-3:00pm. Composting and Worm Bins! Learn about the benefits of making your own fertilizer. The U.C. Master Gardeners of Alameda County share their expertise.

Medicare One on One's with Denise Lombard: Friday Nov. 7th and 14th, 1-3pm, drop ins welcome.

Making Sense of Medicare presented by Denise Lombard: Saturday Nov. 8th , 1-3pm. Learn about the ins and outs of the 2026 changes coming to Medicare and how to make the best coverage decisions.

Chair Yoga: Monday Nov. 3rd and Nov. 17th, 10:30-11:30, Learn from certified instructor Bett Bollhoefer, drop ins welcome. ■

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RN Classifieds

List your 36-word message here for only $24 (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 News is November 20, 2025 (available Dec. 6).

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