The Rockridge News

rockridge.org

VOL 43 • NO. 9 • ISSUE NO. 445 • OCTOBER 3, 2026 CIRCULATION: 6,700 RESIDENCES; 200 BUSINESSES

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



The Colombo Club's storied history includes visits from Italian-American icons: boxing legend Rocky Marciano (above, left) and baseball legend Joe DiMaggio (top, right). Guests attend a formal event in the club's ballroom in 1951 (above, right)./ Photos courtesy of the Colombo Club.

Downstairs at the Colombo Club

by Jack Leal

The story of the Colombo Club begins with 22 Italian immigrants from Piemonte, Italy, who wanted to preserve their heritage and traditions in the United States.

The Temescal neighborhood adjacent to Rockridge was home to a thriving Italian-American community starting in the 1890s. Many arrived from northern Italy, particularly Piemonte, Liguria, and Lombardy, while others crossed the bay after San Francisco's 1906 earthquake and fire.

Many Italian immigrants had limited education and didn't speak English, and they faced prejudice. The East Bay's trade-oriented economy offered work opportunities for skilled and manual labor. Through this process, Italians built new lives in Oakland while finding ways to carry their past lives with them.

One way was by establishing social clubs where members could gather and celebrate their culture and customs.



The Colombo Club's dining room./ Jack Leal

The Colombo Club's first meeting place was the home of Maggiorino Lovisone, a charter member who lived across the street from the Bilger Quarry, at 2037 Pleasant Valley Avenue in Oakland.

Eventually, the club grew too big for the space. According to the club's history, Lucia Puppione, wife of charter member

Colombo, continued page 10

"RO" illustration by Laura Serra

2026 Kitchen Tour Serves Up Inspiration

by Star Lightner, RCPC Board

Thank you, Rockridge!!! The 2026 Kitchen Tour was Sunday, September 27, and drew approximately 375 people to tour eight kitchens and two ADUs. It was a gorgeous day, and tour-goers cruised around Rockridge, visiting the kitchens, talking to architects, designers, and contractors, and meeting our tour sponsors, who provided much-appreciated tasty treats. The tour is RCPC's only fundraiser, and it supports neighborhood beautification and safety projects and community grants. Incredibly, we raised approximately $34,000!

Many thanks to everyone who made the 2026 Rockridge Kitchen Tour such a success, including the homeowners: Christopher Doane and Neal Shorestein, Valerie Gutwurth, Susan Parker and Brian Farrow, Bobbi Schear and Michael Goloff, Jessica Waggoner, Rebecca Sullivan and David Silbert, Mark

Kitchen, continued page 6



Hundreds of 2026 Rockridge Kitchen Tour attendees saw kitchens and ADUs all over the neighborhood.| Star Lightner

INSIDE: ● Regional Transit Town Hall, page 3 ● School Cell Phone Ban, page 4 ● Brain Injury Group, page 8

Coming in November: Rockridge Food Drive

by Star Lightner, RCPC Board

Just before Thanksgiving last year when the Trump administration triggered a major reduction in SNAP (food stamp) benefits, the Rockridge Community Planning Council spearheaded a neighborhood food drive for the Alameda County Community Food Bank that was wildly successful.

We collected 1,539 pounds of food at our partner locations: Market Hall, the Rockridge Library, and Claremont Middle School. In total, we also raised $21,126, including $6,126 from individual neighborhood donations and $15,000 in matching funds from RCPC and other organizations and individuals.

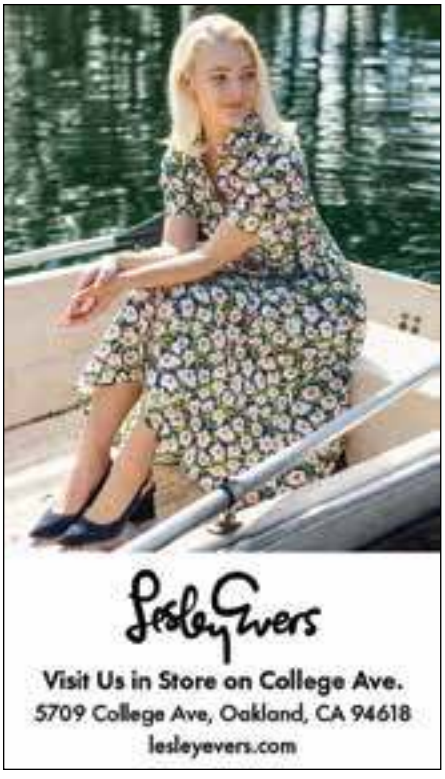
In light of this success, RCPC is sponsoring the food drive again, and our partner locations have already agreed to host barrels. Like last year, we will also run an online campaign to raise funds. RCPC will again provide matching funds, and we invite other organizations and individuals to do the same.

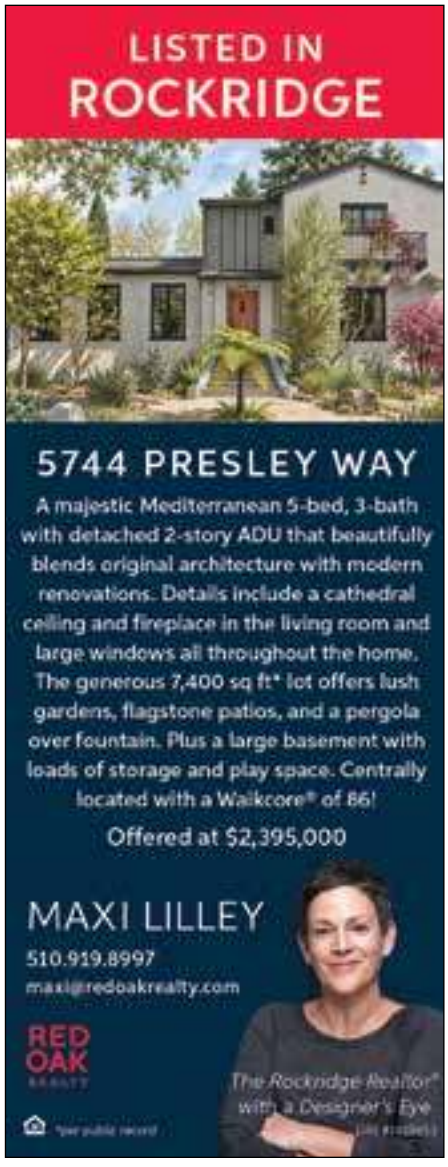
Together, we can help the Alameda County Community Food Bank help others during the Thanksgiving holiday and beyond, when there is great need.



Food bins at Claremont Middle School, some of the 1,539 pounds of food RCPC collected in 2025.

The food drive will run from November 9 through the week of December 7. Stay tuned for more details in the November Rockridge News.●





The Rockridge News

The Rockridge News was founded in March 1986 by Don Kinkead and is published monthly (except August). It is sponsored by the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC), a nonprofit public benefit organization founded to: preserve and enhance the unique character of the Rockridge neighborhood; promote the health, safety and quality of life of its residents; furnish a forum for community involvement; and provide leadership and representation of neighborhood interests.

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Letters to the Editor

Letters are limited to **200 words** & published at the editor's discretion in the order received. Send letters to: **editor@rockridge.org**. Please include 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.

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Rates: $32/column inch ($28 for b/w)
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Email Susan Montauk: **smontauk@gmail.com**

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Neighbors Discuss Regional Transit Issues at RCPC Town Hall

by Robbie Tasker, RCPC Board

On September 10, about 25 neighbors attended a Town Hall on mobility issues hosted by the Rockridge Community Planning Council, with representatives from Connect Bay Area and AC Transit. Mobility is a regional issue; our neighborhood can't solve it alone. Even if every car in Rockridge disappeared overnight, traffic would still come from folks passing through.

From Connect Bay Area, Eliseo Mercado and Alyssa Sanchez talked to us about the upcoming Regional Transit Measure on the November ballot. They told us the measure aims to avoid cuts that would hurt the area's quality of life, to invest in a system that would serve riders and to inspire the next generation, and improve transit sustainability by increasing accountability, efficiency, and transparency. For those looking to volunteer with their advocacy campaign, visit luma.com/connect-bayarea.

From AC Transit, we were joined by Assistant General Manager Paul Kincaid and Senior Transportation Planner Owen Christofferson. They shared how much AC Transit contributes to the area, providing 40 million rides annually on its buses, employing more than 5,000 people across the East Bay, paying out more than $600 million in wages to its employees, and generating $1 billion in local business sales from its activities. They also shared how AC Transit has become a national leader in Clean Transit with its Zero Emission Buses and its development of the nation's first Zero Emission Bus University.

Despite tightening its belt and generating more than $9 million in savings from cost-cutting measures, AC Transit still faces a $53 million budget deficit. This deficit is largely driven by the costs we're all experiencing: rising materials costs from tariffs have raised the price of bus parts and fuel. Additionally, as the federal government handed out historic sums in COVID-19 relief to transit systems, State funding retreated, being less critical at the time.

On behalf of the Rockridge Community Planning Council's Mobility Committee, I presented the local projects we have been spearheading to make our streets safer. It was exciting to share our recently funded project to add pedestrian flags at up to five intersections across the neighborhood. The project aims to make pedestrians more visible to drivers at busy intersections. I also introduced our work to audit the neighborhood's transportation infrastructure.

The Mobility Committee is still looking for more volunteers for our projects. If you are interested in helping with either our pedestrian flag project or our infrastructure audit, please join us at our next committee meeting online on October 7 to learn more, or feel free to reach out to me at mobility@rockridge.org. For info on future meetings, make sure to check rockridge.org.●

Upcoming RCPC Town Hall: Affordable Housing

Thursday, Nov. 12 at 7 pm

There has been a lot of discussion about the need for affordable housing in Rockridge.

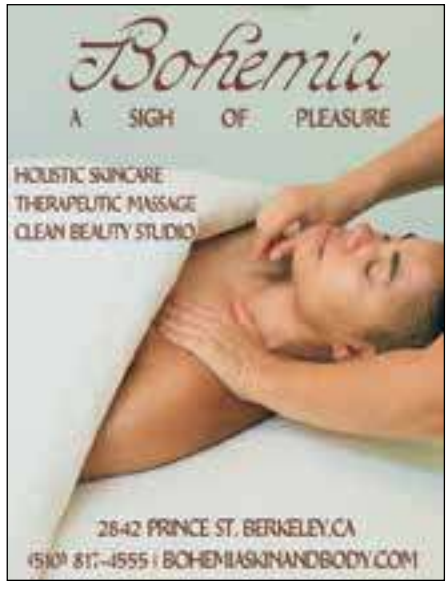
What actually is affordable housing, and is it even possible here?

Join us to hear from experts about the role of the City and the State, what it takes to make these projects happen, and how communities can support these efforts.

Rockridge Library, 5366 College Ave.







Oakland Unified Classrooms Go Phone-Free Under New Restrictions

by Rita Lemley



Oakland Tech students Hannah Lynch, Celeste Daste, Esme Linetzky, and Milo Robson holding Yondr pouches.| Rita Lemley

Across the Oakland Unified School District, students are experiencing a major change this year: no cell phones on campus during school hours.

This school year, OUSD began implementing the Phone-Free Schools Act (Assembly Bill 3216), a new State law requiring California schools to limit or prohibit phone use during school hours.

The new law requires each district in the State to decide how to implement the policy in its schools. For OUSD middle and high schools, this meant Yondr pouches and a stricter phone policy that began August 10.

Yondr pouches are small fabric bags with a strong magnetic seal on top, meant to lock phones at the start of the school day and unlock them on the way out. This prevents students from using their phones during class time and during breaks in the school day, including lunch and passing periods.

The goal of the Yondr pouches is to encourage more social interaction and focus in class by minimizing the time students spend on their phones.

The strict phone policy is a heavily discussed topic among parents, faculty, and students.

Oakland Tech's sophomore class president Kynlie Rodgers said she supports the policy generally, but has concerns about communication during school emergencies.

"The Yondr pouches have the right idea because they aim to help kids focus and connect while in school, but (the policy) fails to acknowledge the safety hazards," she said.

Oakland Tech and other OUSD high schools are also implementing much firmer, more serious consequences for students caught with their phones during school hours. If staff see a student using a phone during school hours, they confiscate it.

The severity of the consequence depends on how many times a student's phone has been confiscated, ranging from having the student's legal guardians pick up the phone from the school office to having the phone confiscated for an entire week.

Marydaisy Fong, an Oakland Tech teacher of 16 years, thinks enforcement is a required part of the new cellphone policy.

"I like the idea of there being repercussions, because if there aren't, it won't happen," she said.

The OUSD phone ban also affects middle school students. While Yondr Pouches aren't being implemented in middle schools, the strict phone policies seen in high schools are also in effect.

Students are prohibited from using their phones during school hours, and if a student's phone is seen at school, it will be taken, and consequences will be discussed with the student and the student's legal guardians.

Claremont Middle School parent Jocelyn Wiener said that this year's phone policy is an improvement, noting problems with the previous approach.

"It was a mixed message: 'don't use your phone' but then 'we want you to have a phone so that you can use it for schoolwork,'" she said.

With only two months into the school year, only time will tell the full effects of the new phone policy in OUSD.●



Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council

Next Meeting: Thurs, Oct 8, 7 p.m.

Guest speaker:
Zurvohn Maloof, Inspector General of the Oakland Police Commision.

Rockridge Library, and on zoom:
rockridgencpc.org

Learning How to Learn at Rockridge Montessori School

by Sandi Zorinich

Every parent who has watched a four-year-old choose a task, work at it with complete concentration, and carefully return it to its place has witnessed something remarkable. That moment reflects what Dr. Maria Montessori discovered more than a century ago: children are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with information. Given the right environment, they become active, capable learners who develop independence, perseverance, and a lifelong love of learning.

This philosophy has guided Rockridge Montessori School since 1986, when Diana O'Valle and her husband, Isidro, founded the school. Their daughter, Sandi Zorinich, grew up in those classrooms, became a Montessori educator herself, and today serves as Rockridge's Head of School, continuing her family's commitment to authentic Montessori education.

Montessori recognized long before modern neuroscience that the hand is one of the young child's greatest tools for learning. When children pour water, trace sandpaper letters, build with geometric materials, or explore mathematics with the Golden Beads, they are not simply completing activities. Through purposeful movement, they construct understanding. Instead of memorizing abstract ideas, children first experience concepts in concrete, hands-on ways, which leads to deeper, more lasting learning.

This approach also develops executive function—the mental abilities that help children focus, solve problems, plan ahead, manage impulses, and persist through challenges. These skills are



Rockridge Montessori School.

among the strongest predictors of long-term success in school and in life.

Equally important is the development of confidence and character. Montessori children are trusted to make meaningful choices, work at their own pace, and experience the satisfaction of mastering difficult tasks through genuine effort. Their confidence comes from competence rather than constant praise. In mixed-age classrooms, younger children learn by observing older classmates, while older children strengthen their own understanding by helping and mentoring others. The result is a community built on respect, responsibility, and cooperation rather than competition.

Perhaps the greatest gift of Montessori is that children learn how to learn. They discover that curiosity leads to discovery, concentration can be strengthened through practice, and mistakes are simply part of mastering something worthwhile. These habits remain valuable long after specific lessons have been forgotten.

Today, research confirms what Montessori educators and families have observed for generations. A recent study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that children in Montessori programs demonstrated stronger academic achievement, executive function, and social understanding than peers in conventional classrooms, with especially significant benefits for children from lower-income families.

Rockridge Montessori has grown considerably since its founding and now serves families through both our original campus and our Oak Grove campus. Yet our purpose remains unchanged: to provide an education that respects childhood, nurtures each child's unique development, and prepares young people not only for success in school, but for thoughtful, responsible, and meaningful lives.

A link to the study is available at pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2506130122. ●







RCPC Responds to Revised Trader Joe's Site Proposal

by The RCPC Board

The Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) truly appreciates all of the feedback and community conversation about the proposed housing project at the Trader Joe's site. We have met with the developers twice to share this feedback, and are encouraged by and support the changes that have been incorporated into the proposed project as a result.

Concern over the loss of Trader Joe's was the most frequent comment that was shared with RCPC, and we are pleased to see that Align Real Estate Partners, the developer, has responded to those concerns and revised the plans to include a grocery store at the ground floor, despite significant development challenges; we sincerely hope this will accommodate our Trader Joe's. We also appreciate the modification to ensure that the retail space along College Avenue will be open to the public, as well as the commitment to increase the depth of the sidewalks along the perimeter of the project.

Regarding the height of the towers, while we appreciate the currently proposed reduction of seven stories, we also understand that introducing 20+ story towers into the heart of Rockridge remains controversial.

We will be advocating for community benefits commensurate with a project of this size and will share updates on those efforts as they develop.

We recognize that there are a range of viewpoints about the project, and RCPC remains committed to creating space for these voices, serving as a conduit for ongoing communication with the developers, and working to lessen the impacts of construction. To that end, we have established a liaison group, composed of the community members listed below, that will continue to share feedback and community concerns with Align.

Neighborhood Liaison Group for Trader Joe's Project:

- Jack Gerson, Auburn Avenue
- Jennifer McElrath, Upper Broadway Advocates
- Leslie Moldow, Chabot Road
- Abe Coffman, Oak Grove Avenue
- Tom Lollini, RCPC
- Mark Aaronson RCPC
- Kristen Belt, RCPC
- Garrick Monaghan Beyer, RCPC
- Jana Good, RCPC

We look forward to providing additional updates to the community as the project moves forward, and welcome your continued input on this important project.●

Kitchen, continued from cover

Martin and Katie Broughton, Kimberly Suczynski-Smith & Matt Smith, and Mark Aaronson and Margie Gelb, who generously opened their kitchens to tour guests, patiently answered questions, and made themselves available for many preliminary house visits. Without them, there would have been no Kitchen Tour.

Thank you also to the 40+ docents who made time for training, described the kitchens, and ushered tour-goers smoothly and graciously through the houses. Thank you to the architects, contractors, design consultants, and craftspeople who gave up their Sunday afternoon to meet guests and talk about the kitchens. Thank you to Platinum sponsor Allie Pembleton, who made the outstanding banners and posters possible. Thank you to Gold sponsor Daniel Stea, who made our beautiful full-color brochure possible. Thank you also to Marble Sponsor: Brenda Wyatt, LaSalle Mortgage; Granite Sponsors: Sogno Design, Ashby Windows & Doors in conjunction with Columbia Kitchen Cabinets/Sollera; and Oak Sponsors: Cristian Hernandez of Compass, FMZ Loans, and Susie Wyshak. And Elmwood Copy and Printing provided a generous discount. We are so grateful for their support. And our unofficial sponsor, Market Hall, once again hosted our registration table and went the extra mile to help us make this a great event!



Kitchen Tour attendees admire a Rockridge kitchen.| Star Lightner

Finally, thank you to all of our outstanding Kitchen Tour Volunteers:

- Susie Wyshak – sponsorship and advertising
- Derek Chan – art, poster, and brochure design
- Carol Kasparek and Judy Weiss – kitchen description writers
- Benedicte Rodet and Caitlin Beyer – photography
- Eileen Ward and Elizabeth McLeod – docent coordinators
- Matty B. – website design and management
- Bruce Goldberg, Gina Rivera, Susie Halper, Natalie Musick, Sam Fishman, Robbie Tasker, Paul McDonnell, Brian Stromquist, Ken Rich, Maryann Amado, Ben Riddell, and Jana Good - registration table, publicity, and miscellaneous
- Star Lightner – Kitchen Tour Chair

We loved putting on this event for the community. Please email kitchentour@rockridge.org if you have feedback to share, or email chair@rockridge.org if you have an idea for beautification or a community grant. See you again in 2028!●

Lavender Nails Spa Celebrates 14 Years in Rockridge

by Monica Simpson-Ayan

In a rare moment of role reversal, Dat "Dina" To, owner of Lavender Nails Spa, sits down for her own pedicure in one of her burgundy salon massage chairs where she has serviced thousands of Rockridge residents. Smiling brightly while her toes are painted a cheery cherry-blossom pink, she beckons customers over with her contagious laugh, warmly saying, "Come in, come in."

Hailing from Ninh Hòa, an idyllic beach town in Vietnam's south-central coastal province, Dina has called northern California home since the early 1990s. Previously running a former nail shop on Telegraph Avenue, Dina decided to open Lavender Nails Spa with her husband, Michael "Kha" Khatran, in February of 2012. Located at the bustling corner of College and Chabot, Lavender Nails and Spa has been an anchor of the community and a gathering place for over 14 years.

"I was drawn to this neighborhood because of its warmth, diversity and strong sense of community,"Dina says. Fourteen years and countless friendships later, Rockridge has become not just her place of business but her home.

The inviting salon is painted in a pastel lavender hue, a color Dina chose for relaxation and calm, and features seven newly installed massage chairs and six nail stations. Kaleidoscopic shelves of brightly colored bottled polishes hang on the wall, where customers pause pensively to choose the color that most reflects their current mood, a part of their personal monthly beauty ritual.

Lavender's curated menu of services includes manicures and pedicures, as well as facials and body waxing. Providing in-demand and cutting-edge nail techniques, folks flock for CBD pedicures and vegan nail treatments known as "Dazzle Dry," one of their most popular treatments. Aside from the extensive services, people return for the loud laughs and genuine friendship. For many, the salon acts as a respite from the day-to-day, a place to nurture friendships, run into neighbors, and see old faces.



Dat "Dina" To, the owner of Lavender Nails, second from right./ Monica Simpson-Ayan

As nails are professionally cleaned, buffed, and painted flawlessly, hands are held as well, allowing for human connection throughout the process, during which personal conversations and life updates are shared.

"I have had the privilege of serving generations of customers, celebrating special moments in their lives, and building friendships that go far beyond the salon chair," says Dina.

Long-time customer Karen Black says that Dina and her team's joyful and caring dispositions are what make Lavender such a special place to return to year after year. "They deeply care about those whom they serve and have so much grace and gratitude for their clients and their whole families."

With other regulars dating back over a decade, and reservations always booked solidly, the modest yet efficient staff of five still makes room for walk-ins where waits are never long.

"We love it when people walk in off the street, and we get to meet new customers. They always leave calmer and more relaxed, and that's a good feeling", says Chau Moore, nail technician, who has worked alongside Dina for over ten years.

When asked about the future, Dina says she looks forward to being in Rockridge for many years to come and is grateful for the happiness of her clients. "Seeing my customers leave feeling confident with a smile continues to inspire me every day."

Fun has also always been part of Dina's magic and equation, so the laughs come in droves. If you're really lucky, you can catch them on Karaoke nights where they roll out the speakers and the staff sing their hearts out.

Lavender Nails is not just a place for your hands and feet, but for your heart.●



The Brain Injury Support Group at The Rockridge Library

by Ryan Phillips

Living with a brain injury can be lonely and feel isolating. The person has suffered a traumatic injury that affects their daily life, possibly for the rest of their life. That's compounded by the fact that it's an invisible disability, unseen by the outside world. Resources can be difficult to find, and connecting with similar people can feel impossible.

Liz Miller, a middle school science teacher who lives in Oakland, knows what this feels like. "I felt incredibly alone and very angry that I couldn't find help when I was suffering so much," she said.

For 15 people with brain injuries, the Rockridge Library became a safe haven this summer.

Over six sessions, they built trust and community together during mindset workshops organized by Miller. Each session had a theme (such as "realistic optimism" and "gratitude") and included guided talks and activities. Participants shared resources (like sunglasses for light sensitivity), doctors, procedures, websites, and apps.

Mark Nathan, who participated in the group, said he hoped joining the group would help him learn to "live with (his) deficits and stop stressing about them regularly." He said he benefited from hearing other participants' stories.

"My main takeaway from the sessions was the remarkable similarities of people's experiences, despite differences in backgrounds and causes of injury," he said. "It was a gift to be able to get together with other people who are working towards recovery from a brain injury."

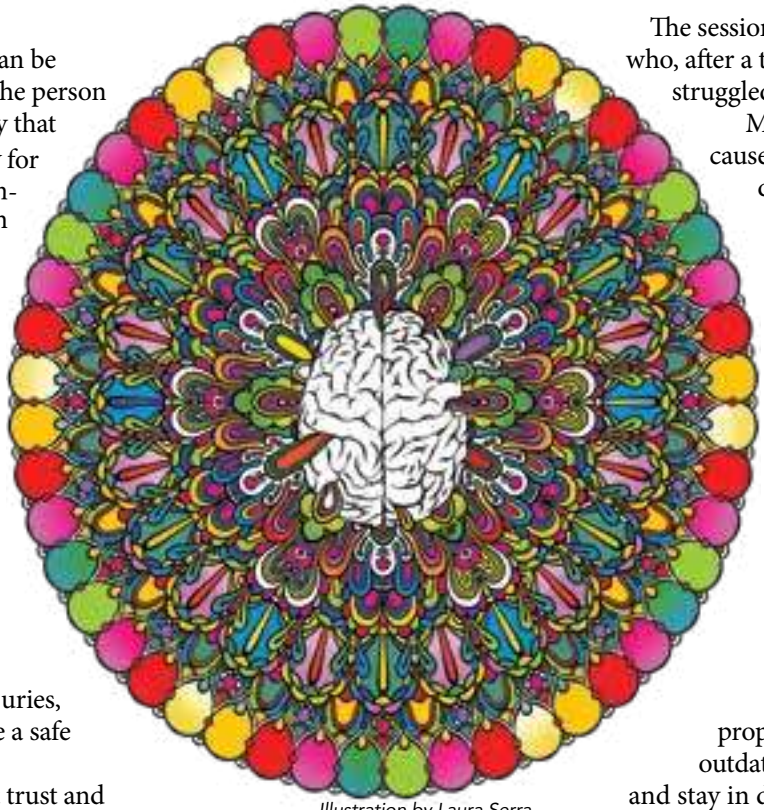


Illustration by Laura Serra

The sessions were open to caregivers as well, and Nathan's wife, Laura, attended.

"I learned about some experiences that are common for those who experience brain injuries," she said. "We got some good resources regarding treatments and therapies that we could explore to improve my husband's well-being. The sense of community within the group was wonderful."

The sessions were organized by Miller, who, after a traumatic brain injury, struggled to find support.

Miller's brain injury was caused by a car accident. She didn't lose consciousness, and she drove home from the accident. A week later, she began feeling nauseous, felt like she couldn't move her eyes, and became very sensitive to light and noise.

Her symptoms intensified with time, and she became unable to work. While she suffered from "an incredible amount of pain," she struggled to find proper care. Doctors gave her outdated advice, like to just rest and stay in dark rooms. Her mental health suffered.

While she did eventually find a neurologist who could help her, she still feels the ongoing effects of her brain injury five years after the car crash. These include limited energy, and her speech slows when she's fatigued. "I've had a lot of PTSD from the accident," she said.

The loneliness and isolation from the brain injury weighed on Miller. When she looked for groups to join for people with brain injuries, she couldn't find anything in the Bay Area. There were groups for athletes who had concussions, but nothing for people with similar conditions to hers. She kept

Brain, continued next page





telling herself, "I can't be the only one."

She wasn't. A neurologist told her about the Love Your Brain Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helps people with traumatic brain injuries improve their quality of life. She attended an online group and found it transformative.

"It was the first time I was with people who knew what I was going through, and we were all speaking the same language," she said.



Liz Miller

After attending an in-person retreat, she was inspired to become a facilitator for Love Your Brain online groups. Her experience at the retreat and leading online groups also inspired her to create an in-person group.

At first, she struggled to find a free space. But she had taken adult art classes at the Rockridge Library, which, in many ways, was a perfect location—a space that could be dark and quiet, handicap-accessible, and close to public transportation. She connected with Anita Bowen, the adult services librarian.

"It really quickly became so clear just how much need there was, how much interest there was," Bowen said. The calls just kept coming in, and they continued to come in until the very last day."

With the need clear, Miller will lead another six-week mindset workshop series at the Rockridge Library starting on October 8. For more information, please contact the Rockridge Library. ●

Oakland Community Unites for Annual Out of the Darkness Walk

by Ellen Lafferty

Community members, local leaders, loss survivors, and advocates will gather for the annual Oakland Out of the Darkness Community Walk, organized by the Greater San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. The event aims to raise awareness, honor loved ones lost to suicide, and fund life-saving research, education, and support programs.

Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the United States, underscoring the need for greater understanding, education, and prevention. The Out of the Darkness Community Walk provides a supportive space for individuals and families affected by mental health conditions and suicide loss to connect, heal, and take action together.



Particpants of the 2025 Oakland Out of the Darkness Community Walk.

"The Out of the Darkness Walk is more than just a fundraiser—it's a journey of remembrance, hope, and community support," said Annemarie Domizio, Walk Chair. "By walking together, we are sending a clear message to our Oakland community that mental health matters, support is available, and no one has to struggle alone."

The event starts at 9 a.m. on Saturday, October 17 at Snow Park, Lake Merritt in Oakland (19th Street & Harrison Street). Check-in and the program opening begins at 7:30 a.m.

Funds raised from the Oakland Walk directly support AFSP's local and national initiatives, including suicide prevention education programs in schools and workplaces, advocacy for mental health policies, and resources for suicide loss survivors.

To register, donate, or learn more about the event, visit afsp.org/oakland.●





Colombo, continued from cover

Pietro Puppione, said that "We kicked them out of the house and told them to find someplace else to play."

That history is celebrated to this day at the Colombo Club, established in 1920 and now located at 5321 Claremont Avenue. It's one of the largest men's Italian-American social clubs in the Bay Area and still thriving, 106 years later.

The club now has more than 1,000 members, with as many as 800 men gathering in the basement of the Colombo Club building each month.

According to Sempre Avanti: History of the Colombo Club: Volume 2, created by Richard Puppione, this club continues to "carry on the Italian customs, family traditions, and recipes brought to Oakland from cities all across Italy."

With an empty stomach and a Peroni from the bar upstairs, all you need to attend is an appetite—and a sense of humor. At 7 p.m., members and guests shuffle down shoulder-to-shoulder into the basement.

The Colombo Club's kitchen is immense, functioning more as a mass food operation than a restaurant, turning over enormous quantities of pasta, meat, and coffee for hundreds of mouths at a time.

The basement dining area consists of long rows of tables, with a table of honor at the front reserved for the president, vice president, and the rest of the board. After the



The entrance to the Colombo Club.| Jack Leal

announcements, food is served.

Tip: Don't expect to always be heard during these meals. Or at all. If you're introverted, you can get lost in the noise; if you're extroverted, you are the noise. As former president Tony Tedesci said, "You can always tell an Italian, but you can't tell him much."

The dinners are substantial, beginning with bread and salad, followed by pasta, meat, and a special dessert: a plastic cup of vanilla or chocolate ice cream, sealed beneath a foil lid. As dessert is served, a server makes the rounds with a bottle of brandy, asking whether you would like a shot in your coffee or on your ice cream.

At each Birthday Dinner, members can purchase raffle tickets as part of an incentive program designed to encourage attendance and participation while generating additional revenue for the club. Prizes vary—from cash, liquor, or gift baskets, to two-foot salami sticks—all donated by members.

With its impressive past, Colombo Club Inc. houses an entire museum dedicated to preserving the club's legacy and its lasting mark on Bay Area history. Filled with dozens of yearbooks, photographs, posters, and artifacts from generations of members and guests, the museum offers a window into more than a century of club history. This collection preserves the people, traditions, and memories that have made Colombo what it is today, featuring pieces from icons like baseball legend Joe DiMaggio.

To become a member, you can submit a membership application that asks for personal information, occupation, and Italian heritage. The application also requires a sponsor, which you can arrange yourself or the club can assign. Once you are accepted, the club will inform you of the current membership dues.

The Colombo Club runs a tight ship with its monthly calendar, with regular membership meetings, dinner gatherings, and special events. Its schedule also includes family celebrations, crab feeds, Father/Daughter 1st Birthday Dinners, and community-oriented activities throughout the year, all posted on its website: colomboclubinc.com.●





Enssaro Opens to Long Lines of Crowds in its New Rockridge Home

by Monica Simpson-Ayan



The meat and veggie platter at Enssaro (5897 College Ave.).| Monica Simpson-Ayan

For sister-and-brother culinary duo Nesanet and Solomon Tamirue, opening Enssaro in Rockridge has long been a family dream. Serving a long list of loyal locals since 2006 near Lake Merritt, the family was ready for a change and looking for new space to expand their concept with offerings such as a future small "spice corner," cooking classes, coffee ceremonies, and more private events.

The restaurant, originally founded by their mother (affectionately known as "Mama Chu-Chu) features her home-made recipes that have made Enssaro one of the most recognized Ethiopian restaurants in the East Bay. At their new home and corner spot on College Ave. at Chabot, the family behind Enssaro welcomes each guest like old friends, filling the space with joyful communal energy that matches the warmth of the shared food, bold flavors and terra-cotta-toned decor.

The design by Kalu Gebreyohannes of Liyu Design Studio, and Tyler Kobic and Dara Lin of DBB Architects and Builders, has created a sprawling space anchored by a modern bar with arched shelves and green pendant lights. The new location also features a tropical garden patio designed by local Rockridge landscapers B&B Horticulture.

Inside the dining room, the menu features all of the former location's favorites, starting with sambusas (beef or veggie available). These handmade, golden, crackling stuffed pastries are packed with either an earthy, robust lentil-and-onion filling or tender Australian grass-fed ground beef and peppers. Both come with a creamy yet cooling, slightly smoky spicy dipping sauce. The cauliflower wings feature a light, tempura-like crunch and mild Berbere spice.

A true gem among the small plates was the butacha. Reminiscent of hummus, this chickpea dip was rich in flavor, smooth and creamy, with a whipped consistency. To kick up the heat, you can sprinkle on Mitmita—a fiery, deeply layered Ethiopian chili spice with Earthy, smoky, salty notes.

Utensil-free and built for sharing, the food at Enssarro is as inviting and communal as the hosts. Their platters feature house-made injera, a spongy fermented flatbread from teff flour. Injera also triples as your spoon, fork, and plate. For those who are nervous or unfamiliar with the hand-forward etiquette, Nesanet reassured guests throughout the dining room.

"Rip a small piece of bread off, and scoop it up," she said.

The meat and veggie platters offer a colorful, savory assortment of steamed kale greens, yellow split peas, spiced red lentils, sautéed cabbage with ginger and garlic, potatoes and carrots, and Ye Doro Wot ("doro" meaning chicken and "wot" meaning stew). Bone-in chicken thighs in a savory slow-simmered stew feature a rich sauce of warming spices of ginger, garlic, and berbere.

To drink, a house "Berbere Margarita" with a Tajín and chamoy rim offered a bright citrus-and-spice contrast to cut through the rich stews and spices. Another signature item is their "honey wine" (T'ej), mead-like with bittersweet hints of vanilla and candied orange peel, doubling as an after-dinner digestif and a staple at cultural gatherings and royal festivals.

"It's buttery and balanced, and if you slightly gargle and swish, you get all the flavor", said Solomon, who himself grows the oranges that are used in the honey wine recipe.

On the sweeter side, a popular dessert features a rich and velvety chocolate mousse cake recommended to be paired with a traditional Bunna—a fragrant, cardamom-and-clove-spiced Ethiopian coffee that serves as a bitter, aromatic counterpoint.

On their highly anticipated opening in Rockridge, Solomon said the longer-than-expected wait was worth it.

"It took a lot of time, but we are happy to be here in our new home and neighborhood," Solomon said.●



Halloween Takes Center Stage This Month, With More to Explore

by Jody Colley,
Rockridge District Association



Two contestants in the 2025 Rockridge Halloween Parade costume contest.

October is when Rockridge truly embraces the spirit of the season. From neighborhood shopping and dining to special activities and the district's much-anticipated Halloween celebration, College Avenue offers plenty of reasons to make a fall outing of it. The month's highlight is the 34th Annual Rockridge Halloween Parade, taking place Sunday, October 25, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The free, district-wide celebration promises Halloween fun for children, families, and even four-legged friends.

Visitors can expect treats, costumes, special promotions, and plenty of opportunities for family fun as they make their way through the district. **The Rockridge Library** (5366 College Ave.) transforms into an adventure hub with librarian storytime, singalongs, crafts, and more, curated by the Rockridge Community Planning Council. **Market Hall** (5655 College Ave.) offers a spooky walkway filled with ghosts. More than 40 businesses will participate in trick-or-treating and Halloween-themed activities.

Participating businesses become trick-or-treat stops, while the district's shops and restaurants get into the spirit with seasonal activities and decorations. The celebration also includes costume contests for kids and pups.

As for the rest of the month, the fun continues throughout the district. Notably, KPFA is presenting an evening celebrating the publication of The People's Historian: The Outsized Life of Howard Zinn, by Dave Zirin, a columnist at The Nation, hosted at **Local Economy** (6028 College Ave.) on October 8–registration required. The new book examines the life and work of the iconic radical historian Howard Zinn, whose bestselling work, A People's History of the United States, changed the way Americans saw the past. Zirin will be joined at Local Economy by Davey D, journalist, hip hop historian, and host of Hard Knock Radio on KPFA.

JCC East Bay and Litquake Present: Helene Wecker on October 15 at the newly developed **East Bay Jewish Community Campus** (5957 Chabot Rd.). Join for an evening with Helene Wecker, author of the bestselling "The Golem and the Jinni" trilogy, reading from her new novel, "The Gates of Midnight."

On October 29, **The Monk's Kettle** (5484 College Ave.) celebrates the beers of the Trappists. They'll have many of the various Trappist beers and ales in the bottle–and some on draft. Don't miss out on an amazing and one-of-a-kind experience.

For the most current information, check the Rockridge District Association calendar at: RockridgeDistrict.com/calendar. ●

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Peralta Elementary 2026 Walkathon

Sunday, October 18 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m

Peralta Elementary needs sponsors for its 2026 Walkathon. Your support funds art, music, PE, tutoring, and more.

peralta.ousd.org/calendar-events/walkathon

Dogs of Rockridge

illustration by Laura Serra



Lady Lola is a 9-year-old LBD (little brown dog). She came to live in Rockridge five years ago, rescuing her family which recently had lost another beloved furry friend. You can see her out walking in Rockridge four times a day, rain or shine, and there is always a smile on her face.



Snickerdoodle is a 2-year-old husky-chihuahua mix adopted from the Milo Foundation. He is unfailingly friendly, interested in squirrels and loves cheese. He only barks in his dreams and howls along to live recorder concerts (courtesy of his big sister). He is ambivalent to pets and loves snuggles.●

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

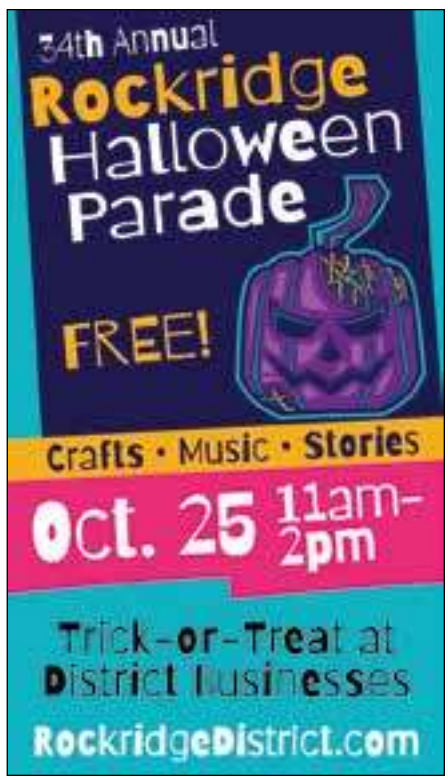
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

One of the RCPC Board members writes an editorial contending that we just need to build more so that "our market economy" can just do its magic and the rents will come down.

Unless I missed it, all this without once mentioning the word "profit." Or wealth disparity. Or how that wealth disparity came to be in our wonderful "free market."

I have lived in Rockridge for over 50 years and hope that new housing will be built for those most in need. Not for developers' profits nor for the most privileged, like me and the author of that opinion piece.

David Weintraub,
Lawton Ave.

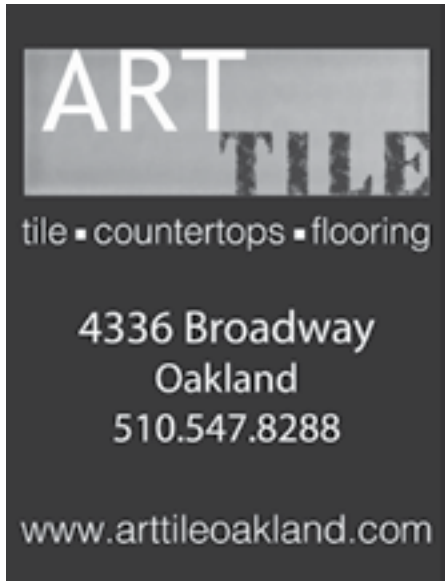
RCPC Website Undergoes Major Upgrade

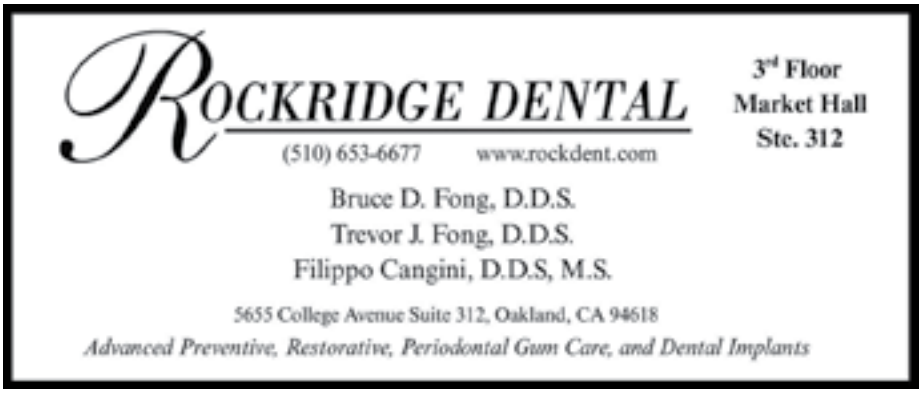
by Gary Barg

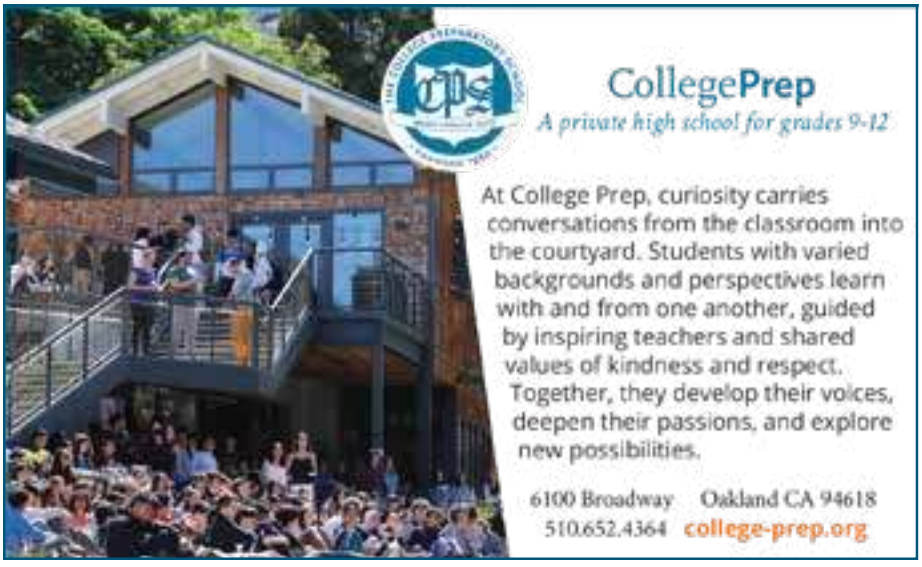
Users can now search the Rockridge Community Planning Council's archive. containing 40 years of Rockridge News editions (for that obscure article you have to get your hands on). The website features over 50 monthly events for the entire Rockridge Neighborhood.

Check it out at rockridge.org: Calendars and Current and Past Editions. ●











For Children (Red = September-only events)

Extra Craft: No-sew felt creatures, Saturday, October 24 from 2-3 p.m. Best for ages 4 to 9.
Storytime: Thursdays and Saturdays, 10:30 a.m. Kamishibai Stories on October 24, Halloween theme on October 31.
Chess Club: Wednesdays, 4 p.m. All ages, skill-levels welcome.
Art with MOCHA: Third Tuesdays; 3:30-5 p.m. Kids and tweens explore fun projects with a teaching artist.
Making Stories Club: Second and fourth Tuesdays from 3:30-5 p.m. Ages 8-12 are invited to write, illustrate, make, and tell your own stories.
Read to a Dog: Thursdays, 4 p.m. Practice reading aloud alongside a dog trained to listen.

For Teens, ages 12 – 18

New After School Schedule:
Mondays: Board game day
Tuesdays: Homework Help
Wednesdays: Trivia/Kahoot
Thursdays: Crafts
Fridays: Video Games

For Adults

Hispanic Heritage Month - Adult Crafting: Tuesday October 6. 6-7:30 p.m. Join us for a workshop making repujados, a traditional metal embossing technique.
Meet the Author –Lea Redmond, This Is for You: Gift-Giving as a Way of Life. Wednesday, October 21, 6:30-7:45 p.m. Artist/designer, Lea Redmond, will discuss her book. Tally Ho! will sell copies of the book to be signed.
Rockridge Book Club: Every second Saturday, from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Please call 510-597-5017 for more info and to get a copy of the book. October's book is Catalina by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio.
Graphic Novel Group: Every fourth Tuesday, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Guest speaker is Rina Ayuyang on October 27.
Adult Crafting Series: Monthly, Tuesday October 13. 6-7:30 p.m. Creating personal maps.
Chair Yoga: Every first and third Monday, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Refresh your body in a joyful atmosphere.
Ask Your Area Home Experts: Every second Friday, noon-2 p.m. 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.
California Writers' Club 5-Page Critique: Every fourth Saturday, 1–5 p.m. Bring 6-8 copies of your work, five pages long, double-spaced, Times New Roman font to be reviewed and critiqued in half-hour sessions.
Needlework Circle: Thursdays, 1–3 p.m. Bring yarn and fiber arts projects to Rockridge Library. Build community, share your passion, learn and have fun!
1-on-1 Technology Help: Tuesdays, 5:30-7:30 p.m. and Saturdays, 10 a.m.–noon and 1-3 p.m. Come with your devices and technology questions and our volunteer tech guru will help. Signup recommended.
Mindset Workshop: Living With Brain Injury: Thursdays, 4-5 p.m., from October 8–Nov. 19. This 6-week series requires registration. For further information and registration please email: abowen@oaklandlibrary.org ●

Rockridge Library Hours:

Mon., Thurs., & Sat.: 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Tues. & Weds.: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Fri.: Noon to 5:30 p.m.
See calendar for events: oaklandlibrary.org/events

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

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

Deadline for NOVEMBER News: Oct. 15, 2026 (available Nov. 7)

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