

Bringing the Community Together

KENSINGTON

OUTLOOK

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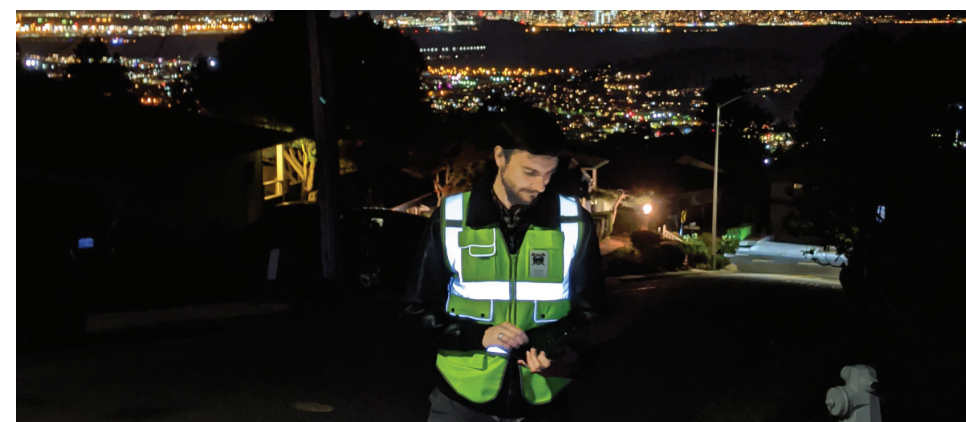
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Night owl (and early bird) Jeremy Halprin measures usable driving widths of Kensington's often narrow, twisting streets. The data is vital to understand how residents can evacuate in case of wildfire. Halprin and his two colleagues conducted their research during hours when most residents are home, resulting in more parked cars to impede egress. Photo by Ian Martin.

Mapping Wildfire Evacuation—Details Matter

By Linnea Due

Last spring, fire board director Kevin Padian proposed commissioning an evacuation study for Kensington, mainly for wildfires. Later that spring, three UC Berkeley graduate students took up the challenge. They surveyed surrounding communities' plans (or lack of same) and investigated the literature about wildfire evacuation. Then they walked, mapped, and measured every street in Kensington.

You might have spotted them out calculating with their collapsible measuring wheel—that is, if you were up early in the morning or late at night. “We planned for a worst-case scenario,” said Stephen David Wong, now finishing up his doctorate. “That meant at night when most people would be home, and on a weekday for the same reason.” The three, Wong, Ian Martin, and Jeremy Halprin, thus accomplished their fieldwork between 5-8am and 8-11pm Mondays through Thursdays.

Their study, which can be found on the Kensington Fire Protection District's website under “Traffic Consultants' Report,” lays out the problem in stark terms: in hilly areas, especially those with narrow streets, walking or running is often a recommended evacuation strategy. But this may not be possible here because of several facts: few sidewalks, unlighted and unmaintained pathways, and Kensington's population—4 percent children under 5, 26 percent adults over 65, 9 percent individuals with disabilities.

As Wong put it, “My general conclusion is that there are various obvious risks even apart from the narrowness of roads. But there are a number of measures that Kensington can do that would improve evacuation outcomes. We are very careful to say that even if you implement these, you would still have a chaotic evacuation. There are so many unknown unknowns.”

See Evacuation, Page 4

Simpkins Speaks His Mind

By Linnea Due

On an alarmingly lovely Leap Day (where is the rain!), Kensington's interim police chief, Captain Steve Simpkins of the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office, met with citizens to answer questions. Simpkins, whose six-month contract ends in late April, said he hadn't prepared a talk—he hoped to hear from residents about “anything you want.” He began with a brief summary of his accomplishments, which are many, including a seven-year stint as a contracted police chief in Danville. Simpkins cited his objectivity in terms of contracting, saying he had “zero horse in this race” other than the good name of law enforcement. That focus on effective law enforcement underpinned all of his remarks. A successful department, he said, must create trust between what he calls the three C's—the cops, the city (in this case the GM and the board), and the community. “If you don't have all three, the department fails,” Simpkins said. “I try to spend as much time with each of these as I can. Maintaining a condition of trust takes work, and losing any one of them is disastrous.”

Simpkins proved refreshingly willing to give spin-free answers. He said that his first priority when he started October 21 was to assess the department's performance. He discovered that the force far exceeds the state standard of training, negating one of the Matrix report's criticisms. Simpkins even asked an experienced consultant to back-check

See Police, Page 12

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Letters to the Editor

Final Accounting Not Too Much to Ask

Dear Editor:

I read with great interest the March *Outlook* piece by KPPCSD director Sylvia Hacaj, “Community Center a Wrap—In Time, On Budget.” While I applaud the work put into this building, Hacaj’s story fails to provide any detail on what the total cost for this project is, where that money is coming from, and what impact it has on the financial health of our district. I think that our board and General Manager Tony Constantouros owe us that explanation.

Finance committee reports reflect that the construction contract was valued at \$1,669,400, along with additional contingency funds of \$176,700. The district's soft costs for architectural, engineering, and design services since 2011 total \$245,788, leaving projected costs of \$2,091,888. The unexpended cash balance of the contract totals \$620,316 as of January 30.

The district drew down total cash to fund the project of \$1,359,816, derived from a series of annual budget and reserve appropriations and EBRPD Measure WW funding. The district received total donations of \$482,072, and it borrowed \$250,000 from the California Special District Association. If my math is right, the funding equals \$2,091,888, creating a break-even budget on paper. However perhaps we should wait until the work is completed and all of the bills paid before celebrating.

Most importantly, people initially felt that making the Community Center “safe” could be done for \$750,000, which is why the 2014 bond measure failed to pass. The district’s initial 2016 RFP for construction then budgeted costs of \$1 million. However, the current construction budget has ballooned to around \$2.1 million.

We should be pleased that we now have a safe community center for public use with modern upgrades (many proposed by prior boards). However, the district must now tell us why its budget exploded, that we can still fund other recurring annual expenses without cutting services, and that we still have responsible, realistic reserves for emergencies that we know will come.

That is not a big ask.

Chuck Toombs

Listen to Joni

Dear Editor,

Like many other Kensington residents, I am appalled to hear that our leaders are having thoughts of constructing a new public safety building in our beautiful, well-loved and well-used Kensington Park. Open space is a precious resource for our children. Studies have shown that good mental health and high quality-of-life are directly connected to access to nature and open space.

I see no reason why the current location of the public space safety building is inadequate. As a society, we need to learn to think small and live sustainably. Wouldn't it be ideal if our community leaders could embody the values of sustainability and living within our means?

Here is your chance, community leaders! Make it work with the space you have. Use California values, not Texan values. Bigger is not better. If we all continue expanding, steadily increasing our needs and wants, and being greedy, soon there will be no nature left. These precious tiny bits of nature are essential, not expendable. People choose to live in Kensington because of the beautiful trees and nature abounding. Stop trying to pave paradise and put up a parking lot!

Cassandra Duggan

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Editorial Deadline ❖ APRIL 10

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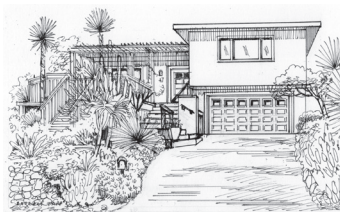
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Deep beautiful garden, lap pool and spa.
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Offered at \$799,000



New Listing! Kensington gem just two blocks to Hilltop school. Huge front deck to view SF/GG. Expansive level lawn. Excellent transportation options.
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Keep Kensington Park for Recreation

Sooner rather than later, I'd like the KPPCSD to give up on the idea of putting the police or some portion of police services in Kensington Park.

Years ago, the community voted for and taxed itself to purchase the Kensington Park property for recreation and open space. That vote needs to be respected as there is no other space to house or expand recreation programs in Kensington. I note that four of the sites suggested for police services are in the park! Whether we are talking about the Community Center, the Annex, Building E, or the hillside and open space along the Arlington, all are in the park.

Clearly the board needs to consider leasing commercial space or perhaps with the fire district's help buying a property in Kensington that could house their administrative staff and storage needs.

Ciara Wood

The Truth About Coyotes

Dear Editor,

Thank you for Linnea Due's March 2020 article, "Family First: Wily Coyote's Here to Stay." What a breath of fresh air in our harsh and cruel world. How rare to see a newspaper article that discusses animals—especially coyotes—in such a sane, empathetic way!

Use of words like "family first" to describe animal behavior is fair and honest. But it's rare. As the article makes clear, animals have their own families, just like we people do. They feel love, joy, and fear, like people do. And just as we strive to respect all our human neighbors, we should strive to do so for other species.

I loved these three quotes about coyotes: (1) "They are family-oriented." (2) "Even adult coyotes love to play, and the pair, which mates for life, spend a portion of each day playing." (3) "They communicate with each other constantly, through body language, facial expressions, and vocalizations." These descriptions take animals seriously. They don't shy away from the parallels between us and the other species in our kingdom, Animalia. These sentences express open-minded curiosity. They're free from the fear and hatred that too often seep into discussions of certain animals who live in close proximity to people.

Think of the equally family-oriented wolves, who have been hunted to the point of near-extinction in many parts of America. Or the gentle, intelligent rats who also love to cuddle and play. I hear they make great pets! But our society vilifies rats, so we can justify torturing them to death in glue traps.

What if we started a new practice of looking at all these animals calmly and honestly, with empathy? Your article gives me hope. I feel honored to share my neighborhood with these coyotes—and to share it with thoughtful people.

Alene Anello

Kensington Can't Afford to Contract Out

Dear Editor,

Kensington cannot afford contracting police services to El Cerrito. If we did so, we'd immediately have to pay our \$26,000,000.00 CalPERS pension liability to eliminate our police department. And, the cost of the proposed contract would push KPPCSD's annual expenses to exceed revenue by at least \$150,000.

At KPPCSD's January 2020 Finance Committee meeting, board president Chris Deppe stated, "If we contracted out and got rid of all the officers, we'd still have to deal with CalPERS." KPPCSD's financial consultant, Bill Zenoni, cited Kensington's \$26,000,000 CalPERS termination liability as an amount "so huge that nobody can afford to do it" and said, "Once you're in, you can't get out because you to have to pay everything." Kensington residents are the only source to pay this.

Furthermore, El Cerrito's proposal is unaffordable. At the November 2019 El Cerrito City Council meeting, Police Chief Keith presented his response to Kensington's Request for Proposal for police services. First year: \$2,500,000.00, plus year-end reconciliation (up to \$250,000.00, if similar to Kensington's fire contract).

There would be annual cost increases; Kensington would be just an El Cerrito "beat"; one officer (less than Kensington Police Department's two officers) to patrol Kensington, but could be called to El Cerrito; five-year term.

KPPCSD's annual revenue is \$3,300,000.00. \$2,600,000.00 pays for police-related expenses for nine officers, providing for two on-duty officers. The \$700,000.00 balance pays for non-police expenses.

El Cerrito's proposed contract: \$2,500,000.00 + \$250,000 = \$2,750,000.00. Add \$700,000 non-police expenses, and KPPCSD would have a \$150,000.00 deficit.

Kensington enjoys exceptional police services in one of the California's safest communities. Contracting out would be reckless and unaffordable.

Lynn Wolter

Passings

Rolf Muller, a Kensington resident since 1962, passed away peacefully at his home on March 2, with his children by his side. For years he and his wife, Dorothy, supported the community by being the team leads of their local NEAT team. He was also an active member of Kensington Hilltop Elementary School's Dads' club while his children were students.

Born on August 6, 1929 in Aarau, Switzerland, Rolf joined Berkeley Lab in 1960 where he worked until his retirement in 1991. Rolf was preceded in death by his wife of 42 years, Dorothy, in 2005 and his brother, Jorg, in 2007. He is survived by his children, Will and Alice Muller along with Alice's partner, Jeff Bokor.

Services will be held Saturday, April 4, 1:30 pm, at the First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley, 2407 Dana Street, Berkeley. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Rolf Muller's name to Vitas Hospice. The family was given amazing support through Vitas out of their Walnut Creek office.



California State Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara answers questions from Contra Costa County supervisors. Lara has instituted a year-long moratorium on insurance companies' fire insurance cancellations. Photo by Gail Feldman.

Fire Insurance Safe for 2020 but Then What?

By Gail Feldman

Ricardo Lara, the California State Insurance Commissioner, spoke at a roundtable meeting at the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisor's Chambers March 5 to discuss homeowner fire insurance. After several years of catastrophic wildfires, the state has received a sixty percent increase in homeowner complaints about non-renewals of fire insurance policies. This past December, Lara issued a one-year moratorium on policy cancellations for homes in specific zip codes that were near or adjacent to wild fires. Surprisingly, Kensington's zip code 94708 was identified as being adjacent to the Skye Fire that occurred October 27 near Crockett. So some of us are now included in the moratorium—but what happens next?

Lara stated that the insurance industry looks at satellite imagery of a region to evaluate fuel load and access to determine risk factors. These risk factor scores are not available to the Department of Insurance, but Lara's office is trying to get access to the models that are being used by the industry. Eventually this might allow homeowners to appeal the risk factor scores.

The Department of Insurance is looking to develop statewide standards for fire resistant structures and mitigations to factor into the scores developed by the insurance industry. Ideally Lara wants to institute a statewide home hardening certification for homeowners. Hardening measures are specific physical improvements to a home such as asphalt roofing. The department would require the industry to provide coverage to those who meet the certification. He noted, for example, that Boulder, Colorado has a certification process in which the local fire department evaluates the home and makes the determination.

Lara is co-sponsoring a bill—AB 2367—to begin this process. To design standards for the many different communities and housing types will take a long while, so it won't be ready before our next fire season. We can assume there may be questions about whether certain homes in Kensington, with short distances between structures, will be able to meet the standards.

The proposed State Budget for FY 20-21 includes \$1.1 billion for fire hardening homes (\$100 million), community hardening (\$750 million) and community resilience (\$250 million). It will not be voted on in the legislature until June. How these funds would be allocated and distributed has not been determined. It would make sense that funds be set aside for fire prevention in areas most vulnerable to wildfire activity while the state has a budget surplus. We need to work with our state legislature to include Kensington and El Cerrito as areas needing these funds.

In the meantime, if you've recently had your insurance cancelled, contact the State Insurance Commissioner at 800-927-4357. The Kensington Property Owners Association has invited a representative to speak at the Annual Membership Meeting on May 2. This will give residents an opportunity to learn more about the insurance situation in our area. Please look for information from KPOA in the mail this month.

Kensington Police Department Seeking Volunteers

Looking for an exciting way to serve your community? The Kensington Police Department is working towards building a robust volunteer program to enhance the services we provide to our community. Nicknamed VIPs (Volunteers in Police Services), these volunteer positions have been proven to be an integral part of delivering police services to communities across the nation. VIPs help to increase the responsiveness of the department in delivering service, reducing crime, increasing traffic safety and contributing to the quality of life in the community. VIPs also bring in new skill sets and expertise to the department without increasing taxpayer burdens.

Typical areas in which a VIP can serve include:

- Crime Prevention
- Increased Visibility in the Community
- Fleet Maintenance
- Administrative Support
- Checking in on Senior or Disabled Citizens
- Vacation House Checks
- Long-Term Traffic Management Plans
- Special Events
- Community Engagement Programs
- And much more!

The minimum requirements for consideration are:

- VIPs must be 18 years of age or over
- Ability to pass a background check including a fingerprint check
- Ability to perform duties as assigned
- Ability to volunteer a minimum of 8 hours per month

If you are interested in this exciting opportunity, please contact Officer Brad Harms at bharms@kppcsd.org or 510-526-4141.

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FEBRUARY POLICE LOG

1 VEHICLE STOP/ OUT ASST, Neilson/Sonoma. Vehicle stopped as the registration was expired. Driver was found to have a suspended driver's license and a warrant for driving on a suspended license, as well as probation. A search discovered a small amount of meth. Driver to Santa Rita and the car towed.

2 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Norwood Ct. Ten males seen running out of a house and into an unk description veh l/s n/b but unk if they turned around, two seen running across the street. Incident location was Arlington Av/Westminster Av, Kensington. Unable to locate.

3 SUSPICIOUS VEHICLE/OUT ASST, Pierce St. Catalytic converter theft interrupted, Toyota Prius on a jack, subj blk clothing went uphill. Officers interrupted a subject from steal-ing a catalytic converter. A female was arrested after it was determined that she was in pos-session of stolen property, burglary tools and a meth smoking pipe. Arrest made.

4 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Yale Ave. RP received phone call advising there was unusual activ-ity on RP's Jet Blue acct, RP called phone # back and was asked for dob and last four digits of ssn, later contacted Jet Blue and discovered that phone call was not legitimate.

5 THEFT, Cambridge Ave. RP spoke with officer re theft of wind chimes (value \$100), stat-ing he had not gotten a call back. No incident was found for initial call.

MISC PUB AUTO, Cambridge Ave. Reported veh blocking driveway. RP wants the r/o to be warned. R/O was a neighbor whose vehicle was not blocking RP's driveway. RP insisted neigh-bor be contacted. I contacted R/O who was cooperative and agreed to move the vehicle the few inches to satisfy RP. The neighbor and RP met, and all were agreeable.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Oberlin Ave. RP says that she saw a mixed-race male, heavy build, 510, wearing an orange/red jacket/t-shirt outside of neighbor's residence urinating on their property. l/s on foot walking w/b Arlington Av. RP advised that she doesn't believe that he was trying to enter the prop-erty, believes he may just need a place to relieve himself. Unable to Locate Source of Complaint.

6 RECKLESS DRIVING, Anson Ave. RPwas almost hit as a pedestrian by a speeding vehi-cle drove too close to RP and neighbor while they were talking. RP yelled at driver and driver flipped him off. The driver then came back down and swerved into him and his yard almost run-ning over the neon yellow "slow" sign. Vehicle description: 1999 Green Honda 4DR.

ANIMAL CALL, Lake Dr. Two large Husky dogs loose, RP concerned for their safety and has placed them in his back yard, he would like some assistance.

7 MISC CIVIL MATTER, Franciscan Way. RP requesting to speak w/ an officer face to face regarding a dispute with a neighbor about tree trimming and wants to see if an offi-cer can mediate the situation before it gets out of hand. Parties Advised.

VEHICLE STOP, Beverly/Camelot. 2005 red Ford Focus. Vehicle was seen slowly driving through the neighborhood and was impeding traffic. Vehicle stopped and the driver was seen conceal-ing something in his waist band upon contact. Driver was detained and a "vape pen" was located. An FI Card was filled out and the cooperative driver was free to leave after short detention.

CITIZEN ASSIST, Arlington Ave Reported hot water heater busted in garage, unable to turn it off. Confire enroute. . KPD Officers were able to turn off water heater.

8 WELFARE CHECK , Arlmont. RP's backyard is Wildcat Canyon. WMA, all blk clothing, dark hair. Has been camping there since last night. Swaying back and forth. Standing ifo tent. RP will take PD units to where he is.. Subject checked by ambulance personnel, later picked up by family member.

Suspicious Circumstance, Arlington Ave. RP is sitting outside of res in gray Mazda 3. Subject wma middle aged 45-60 jeans zip up jacket with a case said that he was there to fix the washer, RP contacted father and he informed RP that no one should be there to fix the machine. Subject went to wrong address, Court not Avenue.

12 PETTY THEFT, Colusa Ave, reported employee left cell phone with wallet attached in the lobby today and it was taken - employee, has rec'd notification there are fraudulent charges on one of her accounts, both RP and her employee are currently at the business.

13 HAZARD, Ocean View, appears to be a water main break, hundreds of gallons pour-ing into the roadway coming up from the street. Assistance Given to Outside Agency.

Animal Call, reported Berkeley transfer, female caller stated her dogs got away from her and attacked another dog(s) and possibly a person. Caller wasn't on the line when trying to get further information and then she hung up.

INCIDENT at Highland Blvd/Arlington Bl, Burglary, Arlington, reported occurred in the past hour, business broken into, money taken.

15 ASSAULT, Highland Blvd. RP stated he was just assaulted at the above location by a male subject, declining medical stated he may need some ice. Vehicle description: 1998 Silver Ford Mustang, RP was transported to hos-pital for his injuries, officers attempted to contact suspect but were unable, Suspect turned himself in the next day.

ARREST FOR OUTSIDE AGENCY WARRANT, flag down by CVS employee of a pos-sible 211. Suspect ran towards BART. KPD Officers located subject, were able to return stolen items and arrested the subject, who was on parole, on an outstanding warrant.

17 VEHICLE THEFT, Albany, assistance to outside agency. Suspects involved in a vehicle colli-sion of a stolen vehicle and fled from vehicle. Suspects located in a local eatery and arrested.

19 BURGLARY, Wellesley Ave. Smashed driver's side window, prescription sunglasses taken.

21 DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Ocean View Ave. RP reported neighbor knocking on her door yell-ing at her and throwing rocks at her residence, accusing her of calling the police.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Ocean View. RP states the resident at Ocean View Ave is making false police reports about him not moving his vehicle when pr the rp he is in his vehicle everyday...RP also stating the responsible at Ocean View is committing a crime by spray painting parking markings on the roadway.

22 TERRORIST THREATS, Ocean View Ave. RP reported neighbor in his 50s threatened to send son over to beat up and said if he was making threats, the RP would already be dead, dispute over a parking issue said he was accused of throwing rocks, says there was another party at Ocean View who witnessed that he did not throw anything, says his car should not have been marked 11-24 since he always moves it. Arrested, cited and released.

28 BURGLARY, Kenyon Ave. RP discovered it 30 minutes ago, has been through whole house.

29 DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Franciscan Way, loud party, second caller advising the same.

Evacuation

...from page 1

Most past studies on emergency evacuations, the three said, focused on hurricanes—“larger events, easier to model.” But in the last decade, other evacuations are gaining attention—“no-notice” evacuations, such as 9/11, and as temperatures rise, wildfire evacuations in the West. Wong said that from 2017-19, over a million people were ordered to evacuate due to wildfires.

To gauge evacuation possibilities in Kensington, the team measured usable street widths (because of deep gutters and ramp driveways, some streets cannot be measured curb to curb), noted numbers of parked vehicles, identified bottlenecks and choke points. They also examined the paths as pedestrian routes and identified fuel loads on streets as light to heavy. A heavy fuel load could make evacuation dangerous or impossible.

One route that could save lives is through the locked gate at the top of the cemetery. This route was so impactful that the team devised two scenarios: one with access, one without. With cemetery access, fully 30 percent of Kensington’s vehicles could use this faster, more direct route to reach Fairmount and San Pablo avenues.

Another problem assessed by the team is how people choose to evacuate. While most would seek a downhill path, others might drive uphill to the closest high-capacity bou-levard: e.g., Grizzly Peak or the Arlington. The group also studied the source direction of a potential fire: from the east, from the north, or from the south. A fire from the south, for example, could see people fleeing north into Kensington, exacerbating jams and chaos.

The report gives specific recommendations, often street by street, such as the emer-gency removal of bollards from Kensington Park Road (leading down from Kensington Hilltop Elementary), discouraging people from attempting to defend their homes rather than evacuating, creating zones so people understand their best routes, and many others. Some streets could become one-way either permanently or on red flag days, parking might be reconfigured on cul-de-sacs, while in an emergency, streets could be desig-nated one way downhill (e.g., Coventry Rd., Berkeley Park Blvd).

Jeremy Halprin mentioned that residents were curious about what the consultants were doing. “We would get strange looks along the way,” he said. “People were curious and would ask what we were doing. Once we explained, we got very positive feedback; people agreed this is very important.”

“We basically walked every single block,” Ian Martin said. “It was helpful to be on the ground. It’s not the kind of thing you can do from a car.” He added that the team had to determine how much of the road could be used and whether the gutters were navigable. “We decided to measure only the space that a typical car could negotiate, not a pickup or an SUV.”

When reflecting on what they’d learned, Halprin said, “A lot of our solutions reflected on specific streets and bottlenecks and what we could do to relieve those problems. Details matter here. A study in a larger community wouldn’t include those details. The small details and each individual link in the network are really important in building effective solutions.”

Wong said that he was grateful for the opportunity to do the study. “Kensington really cares about its citizens’ safety,” he said. “Even the actions that went into putting together such a study is unique in California, especially in a community as small as Kensington. I wish more places had evacuation plans.”

More needs to be done—carrying out the recommendations will take time as will breaking down the town into zones and educating people about routes. This study will eventually inform the larger polygon study that is concurrent, which also identifies zones and best routes.

Please examine the traffic study on the KFPD website. There is a lot to digest; start with the executive summary and go from there.

Traffic Study Raises Questions

By Kevin Padian and Larry Nagel, Directors, Kensington Fire Protection District

The last two fire seasons have taught us some somber lessons about our safety in a wildfire. Climate change has ushered in even more severe windstorms, which have created severe risks of wind-driven ember fires that cannot be contained merely by fire breaks. A fire in the middle of Tilden Park, for example, could ignite wind-driven ember fires miles from the fire. We have seen this in the Tubbs fire in Sonoma County, the Carr Fire in Shasta and Trinity Counties, and the Camp Fire in Butte County that claimed 83 lives in the town of Paradise. The only way to save lives in the event of a wind-driven wildfire is to evacuate the area in a phased, orderly, and rapid fashion. This is the world we now live in.

Because we need a rapid yet orderly evacuation plan, last fall the KFPD commissioned a study of Kensington’s roads, paths, intersections, and potential evacuation routes. The objective was to assess the vehicle parking and driving load in our neighborhoods, the potential stress on our narrow, winding streets in case of emergency, and the steps that might be taken in future to reduce the risk of death and injury during a conflagration.

The study was carried out by consultants recommended by UC Berkeley’s world-renowned Institute for Transportation Studies, whose work focuses on different aspects of traffic, transportation, and infrastructure. They produced an impressive 124-page report, a shorter (6 pages) Executive Summary, and two data files, all available on the KFPD website (kensingtonfire.org). They presented their results at the Board’s February 12 meeting; you can hear it on the meeting’s audiotape.

The study raises important recommendations: Some curbs at T-intersections may need to be painted red (no parking) to allow the passage of large emergency vehicles; double-sided street parking may need to be eliminated on street segments, either permanently or during Red Flag Days and Diablo Wind Events to facilitate evacuation.

Some street segments may need to be changed from two-way to one-way driving. Gratings that span deep gutters between curb and street could be installed to move parking farther off the main roadways; “pinch points” on street segments that normally restrict two-way traffic to one-way may need to be identified and painted red (no parking).

Signs with potential evacuation routes at appropriate intersections (streets and paths) could be installed; more “stop” and “yield” signs could be installed at troublesome and ambiguous intersections.

In general, residents may need to park more on their own properties to keep streets clearer. Vegetation encroaching on roadways may need to be trimmed or removed with some kinds of plantings restricted.

Note that any recommendations for changing traffic configurations must be approved by the county; they can be submitted by the KFPD board, the KPPCSD board, or by any citizens. The KFPD is discussing options and seeks input from citizens.



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Passings

Steven Erik Holland passed away on January 19, 2020 following a courageous battle with Lewy Body Disease with Parkinsonian Symptoms. Steve was born in Granite Falls, Minnesota on August 8, 1949 to Rev. Eugene and Virginia Holland. The family moved to Fremont, California in 1960.

Steve returned to the Midwest to attend Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, where he met his wife, Laurie (Jameson) Holland. After their marriage, they returned to reside in Fremont where their two sons, Erik and Reuben, were born.

Steve began his career with Delta Dental, serving in a variety of management roles. He took a position with Delta Dental of Illinois in Chicago for two years. When Steve returned to California, the family settled in Kensington.

Steve left Delta in 1989 to become an independent insurance broker as a partner with Fidelity Insurance Service. Eventually, Steve became president and sole owner of Fidelity, a position he held until his retirement.

Steve was very active in the community, coaching his sons’ Little League teams. He was Scout Master for Boy Scout Troop 100 and led backpacking trips to the Grand Canyon, Philmont Boy Scout Camp, and the High Sierras. Steve was active at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Berkeley and the Berkeley Rotary Club. Supporting a lifelong interest in opera, Steve served on the board for the West Edge Opera Company. He was often seen driving to meetings in his 1970 red convertible VW Bug.

In his spare time, Steve loved to travel with his wife, especially by train or on tandem bicycle trips. The two completed multiple tandem trips—often a combination of cycling and small cruise ships—throughout the United States and Europe. He also enjoyed the family’s second home in Palm Springs, especially at large family gatherings.


Steve is survived by his wife, Laurie, sons Erik (Briana) and Reuben.



Steve and Laurie represent Cal as they stomp grapes in Croatia.

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HOLY WEEK

ARLINGTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

April 9, Maundy Thursday. 6:30 PM.

A communal meal with music and prayer.

April 10, Good Friday. 12-3 PM.

Open for quiet meditation.

April 12, EASTER


7 am, Sunrise worship on the patio.

8:30 am, Free Community Breakfast.

10 am, Worship Celebration with trumpet and flowers! Children of all ages welcome.

ArlingtonCommunityChurchUCC.org

Welcoming and affirming all people.





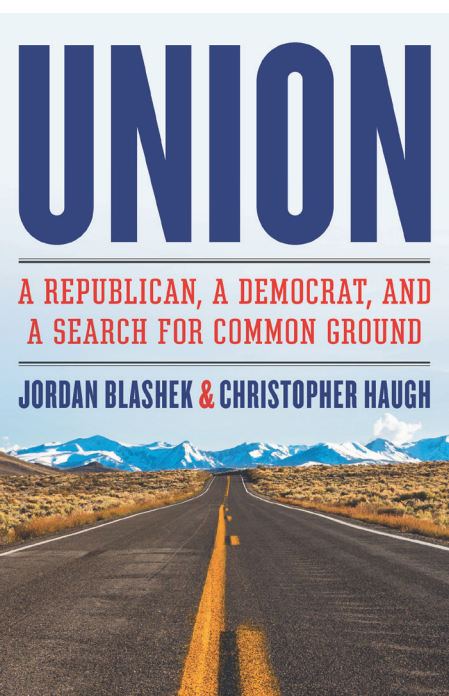
Jordan Blashek (left) and Christopher Haugh (right) enjoy an August day outside Denver in 2018. They had just driven up from Santa Fe and were taking a break before heading east towards Tulsa, Detroit, and eventually Portland, Maine.

Two Friends Hit the Road to Heal What Hurts

By Linnea Due

Christopher Haugh, now 30, had a blessed childhood and one blessedly typical of Kensington. He grew up on Cerritos Creek near Colusa Circle. “I was so fortunate,” Haugh said. “Our house was one of the first farms in the area. It feels like a wonderland. The first thirteen years of my life were all about nature. I would be a different human being if I hadn’t been mucking around in the creek all day as a kid.”

After attending UC Berkeley, Haugh went to law school at Yale, where he met Encino native Jordan Blashek. The two bonded over missing California, an ache that broadened to music, literature, and much else. Blashek had served as a Marine before law school and considered himself a conservative; Haugh was a progressive Democrat. “We became friends without worrying about politics,” Haugh explained. “But 2016 struck everyone to the core. It started to feel that our relationship was odd, and that felt strange to us. Because six months earlier we were best buds. The book became our attempt to justify why we were committed to this friendship.”



That book, coming out this May from Little, Brown, complete with book tours, national media events, and the whole nine yards that New York rarely does anymore, is *Union: A Republican, a Democrat, and a Search for Common Ground*. Over the course of several years, the two traveled to 44 states, talking to people along the way, to try to tease out the thread that binds Americans together—and to see if that thread still exists.

The two happened upon a Trump rally in Phoenix during a drive back to California

from Connecticut. “The Trump rally convinced us that we couldn’t find the answer through politics,” Haugh said. “Instead it’s through music, through work, through redemption. The book is an ode to the America we experienced.”

During weeks-long road trips, the two visited lobstermen in Maine and Jazz Fest in New Orleans, investigated the lasting trauma of a 1921 massacre of the black community in Tulsa, in Detroit met with women who had served decades at a moldering prison, and rode with a long-haul trucker for four days. Their old Volvo, the Boat, eventually gave up the ghost, but the two persisted, even trying to find a patrolman who pulled them over in Idaho three years earlier, when the book started to form.

In the end, the book is not about politics at all. It’s about the hope of the nation and its endless diversity and complexity. It’s about a promise that underlies it all. A promise is not a guarantee. To achieve a promise means working towards something.

“It’s easy to forget that people are just people,” Haugh and Blashek write in *Union*, “and that not all of them are bad. But systems have a way of replacing humanity with cruel, harsh, and unfair ways, and the same is true in reverse. Those fighting the system can too easily forget that systems and institutions are made up of people, just people, and they’re not all bad either.”

“What’s so hard about this moment,” Haugh said, “is that politics is so unavoidable. We can’t separate politics from the rest of our lives. *Union* is our attempt to show that there’s more to the lived experience of America than politics.

America is an aspirational idea. Have we achieved it or are we on the road to achieving it? Do we live up to these ideas of freedom and democracy? Have we failed or are we just on a different step on the journey? I’m a believer that Americans are pretty open-eyed about where we are and are working towards a better future.”

Write Blashek and Haugh: “The people we were meeting—and the fuller picture of one another—were complex. Yet in our weaker moments we sometimes overlooked that complexity. We might generalize or rely on symbols to understand each other, knowing full well that those things often obscure what matters most.”

Haugh’s mother was single; she worked for decades as a lawyer for the Trust for Public Land. “I grew up with a mother who could measure her career in acres saved,” Haugh said. “I knew there more metrics to success than money or power. That’s why I chose to become a writer and now an author. You can affect the globe and care about things rather than just making a dollar. Berkeley and Kensington have influenced this book from start to finish. I never took things on face value. Jordan [Blashek] and I knew we weren’t seeing what’s going on the nation in New Haven, so we decided to go out and experience it. There’s nothing more Berkeley than that.”

Haugh’s girlfriend, a lawyer, is now clerking in New York, so he is based in Manhattan. “I’m spending lots of time on the East Coast. Is it home? Absolutely not. Kensington and Berkeley will always be home to me. The further I go, the closer I feel to that beautiful place of ours.” He comes home often; his mother lives in the same house he grew up in. We joked about Kensington residents never leaving. “Once you get in, you don’t get out,” he quipped.

There are several Bay Area stops on Haugh and Blashek’s tour. Find them at the Sonoma Valley Authors Festival on May 2, Book Passage in Corte Madera on May 25, and West Portal Books in San Francisco on May 26.



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Church of Berkeley

April 12
Easter Sunday Celebration!

9:30 a.m. Family Worship

Egg Hunt at 10:30 a.m.

11:00 a.m. Worship

(510) 525-0302

1 Lawson Road in Kensington

Check uucb.org by April 10 for details.

We will follow advice for public gatherings from the CDC and Health Department.



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Spring Carnival Is Hilltop's Biggest Fundraiser

Join Us Under the Maypole!

By Lauren Burns

Spring has sprung! The days are getting longer, birds are chirping, trees are blooming, and the 73rd Kensington Hilltop Elementary School Spring Carnival is on the horizon. Come join us Saturday, May 9, 11am-3pm, rain or shine.

The carnival is a cherished Hilltop tradition that serves as the school’s PTA and Dads’ Club main fundraiser of the year. Dedicated teams of parents plan for months, spending hundreds of volunteer hours to create a successful event year after year. These parents conquer tasks such as planning, building, baking, grilling, planting, and running booths to name a few.

Their commitment and hard work make a memorable day for their families and community while procuring the funds needed to support the efforts of the PTA and Dads’ Club. Proceeds from the carnival fund disaster preparedness supplies, school assemblies, recreation equipment, teacher appreciation, Dads’ Club work party, gardening supplies and more.

Please join us in May under the maypole. We rely on local support to make the event a success.

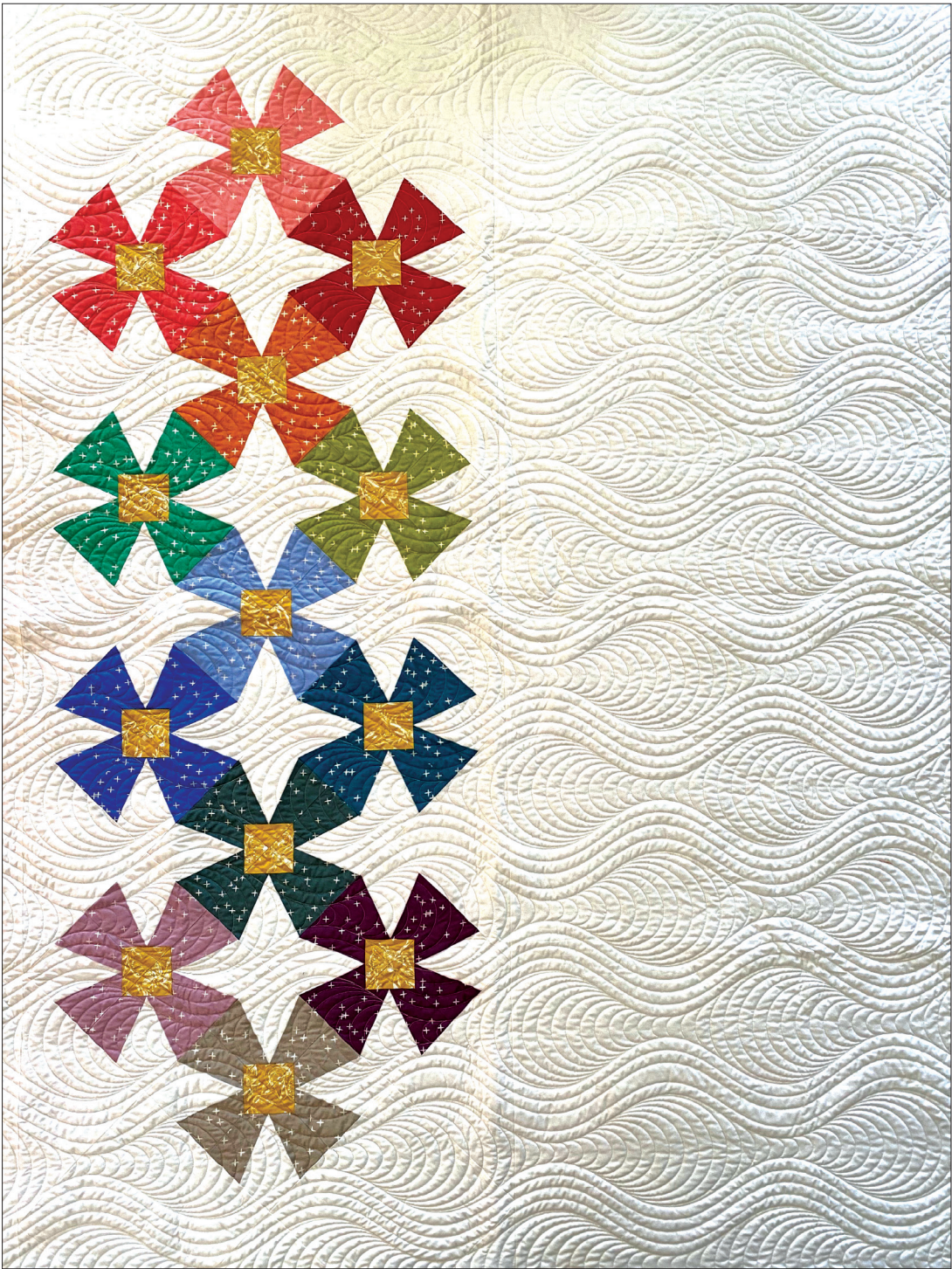
Buy a raffle ticket! This year’s grand prize for the 38th annual raffle is the stunning “Windy Day” quilt. Local businesses can still donate items for prize baskets by contacting Sherry Garcia at sheryngarcia@yahoo.com. Raffle tickets go on sale starting April 18; purchase them from a Hilltop family or at the carnival.

The Carnival’s popular White Elephant Sale will be the hottest one-day sale in town! Set aside your excellent to gently used donations including apparel, toys, books, and household items (no computers, electronics, or large furniture please). Donations can be dropped off at the school Multi-Purpose Room Friday, May 8.

The “Deals on Wheels” benefit bicycle sale welcomes your donations of all sizes of bicycles; child to middle school to adult-sized, including those needing a tune-up or small repairs by Dads’ Club volunteers. To donate, contact Bruce Marvin, bmarvinca@gmail.com. And check out the 9th annual Rhea Wilson Plant Sale to get a head start on your summer garden or to grab the perfect gift for Mother’s Day.

See more details in the May Outlook and access the event webpage at <http://kensingtonhilltop.org/carnival/> See you there on May 9!

This beautiful quilt, called "Windy Day," is the raffle's grand prize. It was made by Susan Morford, the grandmother of two Kensington Hilltop Elementary School students.



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K E N S I N G T O N

Community Education

KASEP

Kensington Afterschool
Enrichment Program

Classes suspended

Like every organization and business, KCC is using extreme caution during the COVID-19 community quarantine. It is KCC and KASEP policy to follow the West Contra Costa Unified School District's (WCCUSD) health and safety protocols. Therefore, KASEP classes will not be held from March 16th to April 6th. This includes the WCCUSD Spring Break which has been moved back a week earlier and ends April 5th. During this period, we will do a deep cleaning to Building E before classes resume.

In accordance with WCCUSD's announced school resumption plans, KASEP classes are expected to resume on Monday, April 6th, at which time, we will start our Spring KASEP session. We will be following the lead of the WCCUSD should the quarantine period be extended.

Welcome Recreation Director Jenny Parks!



The KCC Board is very happy to welcome our new recreation director.

Jenny Parks be joining us just as the Spring KASEP session gets started. Jenny is a well-known member of the Kensington Community having worked for seven years at the front of the Kensington office of Marvin Gardens Reality as their office manager. She and her family have lived in Kensington for over twenty years and her two girls grew up attending Kensington Hilltop School and KASEP classes and KCC Summer Camp. Most recently, her oldest daughter was head counselor at last summer's camp. Jenny has the community spirit so often found in Kensington. She has volunteered at both Kensington and El Cerrito High School as well as being a Girl Scout leader for twelve years! Welcome Jenny!

The Renovation is Complete!

The Community Center is done and the KASEP classes are moving back home. We appreciate the generosity of the Arlington Community Church showed by hosting so many of the organizations in the community during the last 9 months while the Community Center was renovated. The KCC also appreciated the extra care our staff used to make sure that the KASEP students were safely escorted after school to their classes across the busy intersection at the Arlington.



KASEP Teacher Highlight

Environmental Sciences at KASEP! Veronica Medina-Ross, PhD in Environmental Science, a bilingual educator, researcher and consultant is contributing to our planet through education and her teaching Kensington children! Veronica is finishing her 4th year teaching with KASEP.

Veronica's Eco-Kids class for kindergarten and her class Fun Environment for grades 2-5 are designed to help children make connections, understand terminology and concepts surrounding climate change, ecosystems, and water and the effect humans have had on these systems. Learning is hands-on, exploration, interactive to spark the imagination and encourages students to investigate issues to help understand the full picture.

KCC is Hiring Camp Counselor Summer 2020

Applicants must be High School Seniors or College Students; Applications can be downloaded from the website: Kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org



KCC Summer Camp 2020

\$350 per week
Registration Starts Tuesday February 25th
Enroll on Website:
KensingtonCommunityCouncil.Org

- Week 1 June 8 - June 12 (2/3 Full)**
- Specialty: Sandy-CARPENTRY
 - Field Trip: The Jungle
- Week 2 June 15 – June 19**
- Specialty: SkyHawks SPORTS Medley
 - Field Trip: Oakland Zoo
- Week 3 June 22– June 26**
- Specialty: Chef Vicky COOKING - PIZZA CRE-
ATION
 - Field Trip: Golden Gate Audubon Service: learn, be,
do and have fun – help with beach clean-up, meet
naturalist on birding and engage in a team project.
- Week 4 June 29 - July 3 SPIRIT WEEK!**
- Specialty: Recycle to Upcycle - great creative repur-
pose art with April!
 - Field Trip: Adventure Playground Berkeley- gr 1-3
plus time to explore the seashore w/Naturalist
Gr 4-6 - let's go fly a kite! Kites provided!
- Week 5 July 6 – July 10**
- Specialty: Chef Vicky Home-made Ice Cream
 - Field Trip: Scavenger Hunt Kensington Paths w/
Expert Rodney Paul
- Week 6 July 13 – July 17**
- Specialty: The Art of Story Telling with Jean. Awake
the imagination to engage and tell your story
 - Field Trip: Miniature Golf at Golfland Castro Valley
- Week 7 July 20 – July 24**
- Specialty: SkyHawks: Frisbee Golf, Soccer, Basket-
ball and Baseball! Sports with Victor
 - Field Trip: CuriOdessey-scientific zoo and play-
ground, Coyote Point
- Week 8 July 27 - July 31**
- OLYMPIC WEEK
 - Field Trip: Walk Golden Gate Bridge, Lunch on the
beach at Presidio
- Week 9 August 3 - August 7**
- Specialty: LEGOS
 - Field Trip: Walk off-road to Arlington Park, picnic;
Grade 1-2 public bus back home & make snack for
camp!
- Week 10 August 10 - August 14 (1/2 Full)**
- Specialty: Skyhawk Sports Finale!
 - Field Trip: Lake Anza swim; take a break, walk over
to feed the animals at the Little Animal Farm
 - End of Summer Air Bouncer and Jousting Tents on
Friday

BBQ Lunches are part of Camp's Friday life - yes, every Friday! If you're a vegetarian, just let us know for a veggie hot dog. Regular lunch is at 12:30, outside - bring your own lunch; Everyday snack is at 4:00pm at the end of a busy camp day. KCC provides snack.



Kim Roots, Instructor-
group tennis lessons
at KCC Summer
Camp

SAVE THE DATE: High School Senior Photo in May

SUNDAY MAY 3RD at 3:30PM at Kensington Park by Building E. Keep the tradition alive - all high school seniors, attending all or part of Hilltop Elementary School, are invited to participate in the annual Senior's photo shoot. The photo is always the highlight of the June Outlook.

Kensington Calendar

Locations:
Arlington Community Church (ACC), 52 Arlington Ave., 526-9146
Kensington Community Center, 59 Arlington Ave., 525-0292 (closed)
Kensington Library, 61 Arlington Ave., 524-3043
Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley (UUCB), 1 Lawson Rd., Kensington, 525-0302, www.uucb.org

Due to the coronavirus we suggest confirming an event by phone or website.

Ongoing:

Jazzercise with Kevin Knickerbocker
Mondays-Fridays, 9am \$20 class or \$55 unlimited per month. ACC.

Kundalini Meditation, Mondays, 7-8 pm, (1st-timers: req'd intro by appt at 6:30. RSVP amrita@heartofc.org). \$15 per class, \$10 sr/std. ACC.

Mindful Yoga with Wendy Beckerman
Tuesdays, 9:15am, bring yoga mat. \$18 drop-in or discount for series. ACC.

CERT Training The Community Emergency Response Team teaches neighbors to help themselves and help each other. Through CERT, you will receive hands-on training in emergency response. Tuesdays, 6pm, ACC.

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention Tuesdays, 9:30-10:30am, Building E at the park, \$10

Israeli Folk Dance Wednesdays, \$6, lessons/beginners 8pm, request dance party starts at 9pm. ACC.

Tai Chi Chuan Fridays, 9:30-10:30am, Building E at the park, \$10

April Events

Apr. 1 Kensington Unit of the League of Women Voters will meet to discuss local issues at 1:15pm at the home of Sheila Lichtman. Please call 510-527-1332 to RSVP and get directions.

Apr. 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30 Baby & Toddler Storytime Stories, songs, puppets, scarves, shaky eggs, and loads of fun! Kensington Library, Two identical sessions 10:15 & 11:15am. Free.

Apr. 3 What's the Story An hour and a half program of folk tales, legends,

and personal stories as told by professional storytellers Ann Riley and Terry Stokes. UUCB, 7:30pm, \$15.

Apr. 4 American Heretics: The Politics of the Gospel, film and Q&A with producer Catherine Butler. See how a group of defiant ministers, congregations, and community leaders are challenging deeply rooted fundamentalist Christian doctrine in favor of a “gospel of inclusion.” UUCB, 2pm. Free.

Apr. 5 Sue Ellen Parkinson will speak and show slides on "Creating a Bridge to the Sacred Feminine." Coming from outside the Christian tradition, her art looks at the female saints of Christianity from a unique perspective. She is particularly drawn to Mary Magdalene and the Black Madonna. UUCB, 9:30am. Free.

Apr. 5 Palm Sunday A procession of palms and special music to begin the Christian Holy Week. 10am, ACC.

Apr. 6 Kensington Library Knitting Club “The Castoffs” All levels welcome. Please bring your own needles and yarn. Learn new stitches, share your talents, and meet new friends. 6:30pm. Free.

Apr. 7, 21 & 28 Family Storytime Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome. Kensington Library, 6:30pm. Free.

Apr. 9 Dahlia grower and show veteran Deborah Dietz will talk on growing dahlias in the Bay Area. There will be tubers/cuttings for sale. 9:30am, El Cerrito Community Center, 7007 Moeser Lane.

Apr. 9 Maundy Thursday. A potluck meal to remember Jesus’ last supper with his disciples. ACC and UUCB congregations will be worshipping together and visitors are most welcome. ACC, 6:30pm.

Apr. 10 Good Friday. Sanctuary open for meditation. ACC, 12pm-3pm.

Apr. 12 Easter Sunrise service on patio, 7am. Free community breakfast, 8:30am am. Worship Celebration with trumpet and flowers, 10am. ACC.

Apr. 12 Easter Sunday festivities at UUCB. See uucb.org for details.

Apr. 14 Junkology! Dr. Recycle applies a little TLC (Think-Laugh-Create) to

common trash and gets some wild and wacky results. Kids will have a great time and create some zany art of their own. Kensington Library, 6:30pm. Free.

Apr. 16 Bridge Night Monthly potluck and bridge play at all levels for ACCers and new guests. Donation. ACC, 6pm.

Apr. 18 Topaz Stories Ruth Sasaki, award-winning author, will discuss her “Topaz Stories Project” about the World War II incarceration of Japanese-Americans in Topaz Internment Camp, and its relevance today. AAUW West Contra Costa meeting, Christ Lutheran Church, 780 Ashbury Ave., El Cerrito. 10am. Free, all welcome.

Apr. 18 CommUniTea Neighborhood Teatime and Talk. Come taste treats and fine teas at Raxakoul Coffee and Cheese Market on the Arlington. Original music 4:30-5:30pm by Jesse H. Tasting from 4-6.

Apr. 19 Beverly Allen, PhD, Professor Emerita of Syracuse University and Visiting Professor at Stanford, will speak in the Personal Theology series. UUCB, 9:30am. Free.

Apr. 19 Messages from the Heart Performance by Dayana Claghorn, alto, and Mark Walstrom, tenor and guitar, with Bryan Baker on piano. Benefit for UCCB. Cost \$20 general, \$15 student/senior. 1pm, UUCB.

Apr. 20 Monthly Memoir Group. Free group led by Ruth Robinson in the Fireside Room. ACC, 10am.

Apr. 20 Origami Fun! Make monsters, pigs, birds, and cups just by folding paper. We will also have origami books available for those who would like to try additional, maybe more complicated, designs. Kensington Library, 3-4pm. Free.

Apr. 20 Free Concert Duo Gadjo Back by popular demand! Enjoy an evening of French Gypsy Jazz. Duo Gadjo’s music is largely inspired by the sounds of the ‘20s and ‘30s, when jazz was the



new thing and Paris was the place to be. Duo Gadjo’s repertoire, featuring Isabelle Fontaine on vocals, includes many French classics as sung by Edith Piaf, Charles Trenet, Yves Montand and others, as well as standards from the Great American songbook. Kensington Library, 6:30pm. Free.

Apr. 21 Tween/Teen Craft Join us for a fun arts and crafts program, chat about books, and just hang out! Ages 11-18 Kensington Library, 3:30 pm. Free.

Apr. 25 Community Center Grand Opening Come tour the remodeled “Youth Hut,” see the new kitchen, redone floors, the NanaWalls that look out onto the lawn and the bay, and all the ADA upgrades. Refreshments will be served. 2pm.

Apr. 26 Rev. Előd Szabó, Balazs Scholar at the Starr King School for the Ministry, will speak about "How do Unitarians in Transylvania live out their beliefs and values as a community in rural and urban settings?" UUCB, 9:30am. Free.

Apr. 26 Showing of *The Anonymous People*, a film about the millions of Americans living in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction, 11:30am, ACC. Free.

Apr. 26 Reconciliation, a concert by Kensington Symphony Orchestra, UC Berkeley Alumni Chorus, Dominican Chorale, choirs of the Unitarian Universalist churches of Kensington and San Francisco. UUCB, 3pm. \$20/15 at the door.

Apr. 27 Kensington Library Book Club Join the discussion! This month’s selection is *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. Open to all. The book group alternates classic and contemporary literature monthly. 6:30pm. Free.

Apr. 28 Awesome Rubber Band Balls! Make your own cool, colorful rubber band balls. Just keep on adding more rubber bands! Kensington Library, 3:00 pm. Free.

Save the Date: Kensington Property Owners Association annual meeting May 2, 10am-noon, ACC. lege, published poet and storyteller. "What Does It Mean to Honor your Mother?" UUCB, 9:30am. Free.

Senior and Disabled Residents Benefit from New Transportation Program

Living in a community with lots of hills has its pluses and minuses. When it comes to driving, the streets are narrow, and walking can be challenging. Most people want to drive if possible and remain independent. But what if you want to drive less, or not at night or in bad weather?

Perhaps you are considering options to driving, such as using the bus or BART. A new program for West County residents, Travel Training, is funded by the transportation half-cent sales tax we all pay. Travel Training helps senior and disabled residents learn how to use transit (bus and BART), ferry and local city van services for senior and paratransit.

The agency in charge of this program is called West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee (WCCTAC). Janet Bilas is the program coordinator. Janet will be offering free Travel Training workshops specifically for Kensington residents on the following dates: May 20, at 10am-noon and May 21, 10am-noon. You only need to sign up for one of the dates. Each workshop will be held at the Unitarian Church on 1 Lawson Lane.

Here are some of the things you will learn at the one-hour workshop: How to register and receive a Senior Clipper card (the Bay Area transit fare card for BART, AC Transit, ferries, etc.); How to enroll in LYFT and take a LYFT trip anywhere in West Contra Costa County for \$3; Sign up to take a trip with a group and learn about riding the bus and BART or the Richmond ferry; If you have a mobility device, we can arrange a one-on-one training on accessing transit and best practices for wheelchair and scooters.

Contact WCCTAC’s Travel Trainer, Janet Bilbas, at 510-210-5937 or you can also email Janet at jbilas@wcctac.org.

Community Meeting Calendar

Please confirm meeting time and place by phone or website. Schedules are uncertain due to the coronavirus.
Be sure to continue supporting the Kensington Farmers' Market, Sundays 10-2, at Colusa Circle

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New Director, Old Hand

By Linnea Due

The Kensington Community Council has a new recreation director in charge of the Kensington After School Enrichment Program, KCC’s adult classes, and the summer camp. Jenny Parks may have a new job title, but she’s a familiar face around town. Parks and her husband Toby, who works for MRE Commercial Real Estate in Emeryville, have lived in Kensington since 1997 and raised their two daughters here. Parks has been involved in Kensington’s school and family activities since her kids were tiny, so she comes with a lot of on-the-job training.



Photo by Marty Westby

Parks worked in marketing and as a corporate events planner for software companies until her first daughter, Hannah, was born in 1999. Both her daughters went to Kensington Hilltop, Korematsu Middle School, and El Cerrito High. Parks enrolled them in KASEP classes, and they also attended KCC’s camp during the summer months. “My first day as director [March 9] was yesterday, and it was a walk down Memory Lane,” she said. “Not much has changed in twenty years.”

Her daughters, she recalled, loved the KASEP carpentry classes and sewing. “And now we offer environmental science and a chocolatier class,” Parks said. “You can imagine how popular that is.”

Parks’ last job was for Marvin Gardens in marketing; she also served as office manager. When the realty closed the Kensington office at the end of August, Parks did not go on to Red Oak Realty but stayed to close up the office. Then she began looking at jobs. “I’ve been talking to Anne [Forrest] for several months,” Parks said, referring to the longtime KCC board member who has superintended KCC’s educational and family-oriented activities for years. “I think it’s going to be a good fit.”

Besides tracking her own daughters’ experience with the program, Parks’ training as a manager and events planner translates well to the task of setting up classes for adults and children, as well as the activities and field trips that characterize the summer camp. Summer camp involves hiring counselors (both Parks’ daughters served as counselors as teens) and scheduling for kids who might enroll for just a week or for the entire summer. It also involves coordinating with parents and their busy lives.

Parks is familiar with the senior photo shoot, scheduled this year for May 3, 3:30pm at Kensington Park. Her younger daughter, Sierra, is a senior this year and will be participating in the traditional shot of Kensington’s graduating seniors that appears on the front cover of the June *Outlook*. Parks also served as a Girl Scout co-leader with Meg Shean for twelve years for Sierra’s troop. The troop has been together all that time, although in middle school, the scouts were spread across seven different middle schools. Parks and Shean organized a big trip to Costa Rica for the girls, which necessitated fundraising. “Lots of cookies,” Parks remembers. “A lot of cookies.”

Hannah is now a junior at Cal Poly, but Sierra has been babysitting, so Parks has met some of her future clientele. “Because my youngest daughter is graduating and going off, I’m looking to stay involved with the community,” Parks said. “I’m excited about the new Community Center and looking forward to bringing in some new adult classes. I really enjoy working in the community. I loved that about Marvin Gardens. We were right downtown, and I could see so many people. Now I can get to know the younger parents in town.”

Parks has been a longtime contributor to the PTA, the Kensington Education Foundation, and to El Cerrito High’s School Activity Fund, which raises money for programs that benefit teens. Now she turns her attention to Kensington’s adults and kids.

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Thank you to our fellow K-Group, the Kensington Improvement Club (KIC), Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD), the Kensington Property Owners Association (KPOA) and the Friends of the Kensington Library (FKL) and the Kensington 360o group who all donated towards the renovation of the Kensington Community Center.

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Police

...from Page 1

his opinion, and the consultant agreed that the department was more than up-to-date on training. The interim chief also performed a surprise spot-audit of police reports. “They were very good,” he said. “I was impressed with the level of detail.” Many departments, he added, “wouldn’t have time to go into that detail,” an advantage with a smaller department.

When someone asked, again citing the Matrix report, if Simpkins agreed that the department needed two people on at night for safety reasons, Simpkins shook his head.



Photo by Ford Whitefield-Brewer

“Agencies this size have one person overnight,” he explained. “The KPOA [Kensington Police Officers Association] is OK with that. They have no expectation of having two people at night. Is [two people] industry standard? Yes. Do you have to have it in Kensington? No.” He told a story about one night he was patrolling when he thought he might have a “situation”—while he was talking to the Albany dispatcher about the problem, an Albany officer, hearing him over the radio, immediately vectored to Simpkins’ location and pulled up to give assistance within two minutes of the call.

Another person asked about Matrix’s insistence on always having one super-

visor per shift, which meant employing a chief, a lieutenant, and four sergeants on a ten-person squad. Simpkins held up his cell phone. “Just call or text. It’s 2020. Albany is on our radio channel. They have a sergeant on duty 24-7. You don’t need helicopter management or sergeants hovering. They don’t have four sergeants in Orinda, which is much larger. They have two.”

There were many questions about how overtime is assigned, with questioners asking why some officers had large amounts of overtime and others very little. Simpkins said that didn’t surprise him, because some people don’t like to work overtime while others love it. He added that larger organizations often have more staffing difficulties. “I haven’t had a single staffing problem the entire time I’ve been here,” he said. “In a smaller organization, they look out for each other and realize their responsibility to each other.”

Another Matrix concern was recruitment. How could Kensington attract good officers when we provide so little excitement? “I’ve been teaching at the [police] academy for 16 years,” Simpkins said. “The stereotypical cop wants to drive fast, chase bad guys, and save the world. But there are others who love the chance to do real community policing. We don’t have a lot of calls for service, but we have opportunities for creative community policing.” He also noted that there is more emphasis now on the why a crime or a condition is happening than there was in the past. Ultimately, he said, with recruits he would look for fit. “I can train you to do a car stop,” he said. “I can’t train you to fit this community.”

In terms of staffing, Simpkins said that there are sometimes one, two, or three people on duty during the day, depending upon the day and whether an officer has to go to Martinez or is training. He said his preferred number is a ten-person department, though he can live with nine. (An experienced traffic officer was hired at the end of February.) Simpkins believes that six patrol officers, two supervisors (sergeants, lieutenants, or captains), and a chief would fill the bill. “You have to strike a balance between organizational efficiency and fiscal responsibility,” he said.

One person asked if there was a plan in place for Simpkins’ departure. He was hired for a three- to six-month stint, which ends in April, but there is talk of a two-month extension (the *Outlook* went to press before that decision was made). Simpkins took a long way around his answer, explaining that when he became chief in Danville, he made mistakes and did not fully get up to speed for the first 18 months. The rest of his tenure, he said, was smooth sailing. The learning curve for a chief, he explained, is very steep. “I strongly advocate that whoever takes the torch from me be a seasoned chief.” Simpkins has located a veteran chief, though any hire is up to the GM and the board.

He was also asked about hybrid contracting. “Right now you’re contracting on leadership,” he pointed out. “Next one I would suggest is Internal Affairs. That would only be as needed. Next is a contract for major crimes, again as needed. I would also suggest contracting for a property and evidence room. That would buy 200-300 square feet. You can absolutely run a small department, and you can absolutely contract out. Don’t forget that the majority of departments are small.”

Simpkins was asked about how the police could manage to eke out a space in the Public Safety Building, now planned for the fire department only, though both boards are meeting to brainstorm solutions. “I just talked to the architect,” Simpkins said. “In a perfect world, I would ask for a good interview room. We could use a sleep room—even a cot would help. But I think there is a way that both agencies can be in that building. There is unnecessary space taken up by hard files, for example. Both entities are going to have to compromise. There are industry standards—and there is the reality in Kensington.”

Simpkins was adamant about the chain of command. “You are not going to find a police chief who will want to work directly for the board. No police chief wants to be in that position. Combining the police chief and general manager was a terrible idea. The police chief needs to report to a person hired by the board.”

Which brought up another avenue: “There is an election coming up. A chief interested in longevity wants to know who his bosses are. Do I want to walk into a situation where my boss’ bosses might change?” Simpkins thought after the election a full-time hire could be made—“and that gives that person two years to prove himself. Kensington,” he said, “needs a full-time chief.”

At the end, Simpkins noted that he is not interested in generating more controversy. “I want a police department that either nobody thinks about or that people are proud of.”



Experience Kensington's New Labyrinth

By Susan Yourd

The number of natural spaces where one can find some sense of peace within walking distance from home has recently expanded. On the grounds of the Arlington Community Church, there are now four possibilities to enjoy the surroundings: The Arlington/Rincon gore area has a small circular area with a wall to sit on—a perfect place to sit alone or with friends while waiting for your child to finish school. The concrete patio has a new deck with benches to catch the morning sun, the small round space under the trees to the north of the patio is a perfect spot to be “alone” with nature and one’s thoughts, and a newly installed labyrinth calls for both movement and listening to yourself. Each space is framed in native plantings and created especially for the use of the Kensington community.

The most recent installation, the labyrinth, was an idea planted long ago and nurtured by folks adept in its usage. Earlier this year, a generous bequest made it possible. It is fully accessible to walkers and to those with wheelchairs.

This labyrinth deserves special emphasis because there are so few in the Bay Area. Lars Howlett, a master builder of labyrinths, has studied the geometry governing their design: “I love working with labyrinths because it combines my interests in art, design, math, spirituality, community building, history, place-making, and mythology,” he said. The East Bay resident is considered a leading expert in the creation of custom labyrinths from exact replicas of classical and medieval designs to one-of-a-kind installations. Howlett not only designed the Kensington labyrinth, he also prepared the site for a group of volunteers who helped with its installation in February.

Walking a labyrinth is an ancient practice that has been used for simulating a journey or pilgrimage, for clearing one’s thoughts, for meditation, and for quieting the mind through repetitive movement. “I feel truly blessed to create time and space for communities by continuing the tradition of recreating this ancient archetype that continues to connect with people in so many beneficial ways in these stressful, chaotic times,” Howlett said.

You can meet Lars Howlett on May 7 at Arlington Community Church’s First Thursday Potluck, a monthly social with occasional special speakers. Howlett will speak to the history of labyrinths with photos of his past projects and visits to sacred sites around the world, and will explain his thoughts about walking meditation. He has also generously offered to do a facilitated walk on the new outdoor labyrinth if there is enough light that evening. Social time is at 6pm, potluck dinner at 6:30, and Howlett will give his presentation at 7pm. Please feel welcome to come, bring your friends, meet our speaker, and participate in a special evening.

