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KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

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APRIL 2025 A PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL VOLUME 83 NUMBER 3



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Photo by Sacha Kawaichi

Kensington Gourmet Foods Now a Must-Go on the Arlington

By Sacha Kawaichi

When you walk into Young's Market, you'll see something new: a brightly lit deli called Kensington Gourmet Foods. And when you sample the wonderful offerings, you'll see why residents are flocking to support a new local treasure.

Longtime deli worker Javier Velarde and his wife Araceli are the new owners of Kensington Gourmet Foods, renting the space from the owners of Young's. Velarde's brightly lit case is beautifully laid out with meats, chicken and fish, as well as many varieties of sausages and salads. Velarde says his most popular meat is New York steak, with the other favorite fresh salmon he sources from a company that uses sustainable best practices. He also offers spare ribs, roasted or barbequed depending on the day, and whole roasted chicken.

Thursday is special: everyone comes for the fried chicken and cornbread. There are many deli salads including homemade tuna and egg. Sometimes Velarde offers roasted beets and brussels sprouts and even homemade crab cakes. You can always find smoked salmon.

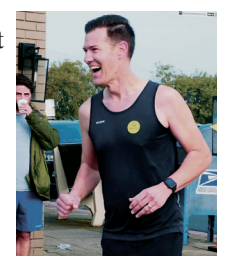
People come from all over for Velarde's sandwiches, both hot and cold. He says the most popular is a hot turkey, bacon, bleu cheese sandwich with lettuce and tomato on a deli

See Deli, Back page

Successful Colusa Circle 5K Aids Kensington Creeks

By Rae Quigley, Zip Code East Bay

The Colusa Circle 5K charity fun run transformed Colusa Circle into a vibrant celebration of community spirit and environmental stewardship on Saturday, March 15. This is the seventh year Zip Code East Bay has hosted the event, which benefited from perfect timing this year as clear skies replaced days of relentless rain. Runners of all ages gathered to support the Watershed Project, this year's beneficiary organization. The Watershed Project works to protect and restore the San Francisco Bay Area watershed. Kensington is part of the Wildcat Watershed, where Wildcat Creek flows from Tilden along Wildcat Canyon to the bay.



"Protecting our creek starts with our everyday actions," notes Juliana Gonzalez, executive director of the Watershed Project. Kensington residents can help protect the watershed through simple daily actions. Avoid spilling trash or pollutants on the ground, as they eventually reach the creek. Capture rainwater in gardens to reduce runoff and allow clean water to slowly filter into the creek. Consider installing rain gardens and bioswales, which slow water flow and allow dirt and pollutants to settle out before entering Wildcat Creek or other Kensington creeks, such as Cerrito Creek.

Numerous local businesses contributed

See 5K, page 4

Kensington and Beyond Update

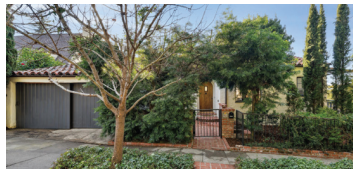
April 2025



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Kensington Market Update

MARCH 2025 9 Closed Sales Median List Price: \$1,195,000. Median Sales Price: \$1,225,000. Median Sq. Ft.: 1,841 Median Cost Per Sq. Ft.: List Price: \$678.44 Sales Price: \$857.94 Average Days on Market: 15	MARCH 2024 6 Closed sales Median List Price: \$1,375,000 Median Sales Price: \$1,472,500 Median Sq. Ft.: 1,664 Median Cost Per Sq. Ft.: List Price: \$784.74 Sales Price: \$878.79 Average Day on Market: 12
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Key Trends Defining Buyer Motivation 2025

1. Moving to the Edges of Cities: Buyers seek more space and affordability without losing access to culture, convenience, and work — it is a combo of working from home part-time and needing to be in the office.
2. Energy-Efficient, Eco-Friendly, and Smart Homes: Sustainable living is essential. Solar panels, smart tech, and eco-friendly materials are now must-haves, offering savings and lower environmental impact.
3. Insurability-Ready Upgrades: Buyers demand safety and insurability: modern electrical systems (no knob-and-tube, or outdated panels), fire-resistant roofs, double-pane windows, and defensible space.
4. Connected, Vibrant Neighborhoods: Walkable communities near shops, schools, and parks remain top priorities, emphasizing lifestyle and a sense of connection.
5. Sellers who cover the buyers' broker' commissions as a key marketing strategy. Instead of requiring buyers to pay upfront, these costs are built into a higher sale price that can be financed, making the purchase smoother and more appealing.

Curious about your home's true value? Let's uncover its hidden potential together. Contact me for a confidential, complimentary consultation on your home's current worth and smart improvements to maximize your return on investment.

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February Patrol Activity Log

- Feb 1: Hit-and-run on Arlington Avenue.
- Feb 6: Theft from fraud on Los Altos Drive.
- Feb 6: Grand theft from building on Westminster Avenue.
- Feb 7: Commercial burglary on Arlington Avenue.
- Feb 9: Suspicious circumstance at police station.
- Feb 14: Non-injury vehicle accident on Arlington Avenue.
- Feb 15: Verbal argument on Coventry Road.
- Feb 17: Burglary on Eureka Avenue.
- Feb 17: Stolen vehicle on Anson Way.
- Feb 18: Traffic stop on Grizzly Peak Blvd; driver cited for suspended license.
- Feb 21: Vandalism on Arlington Avenue.
- Feb 23: Traffic stop on Colusa Avenue for non-moving violation; driver arrested and cited.
- Feb 23: Criminal threats on Franciscan Way; arrest made.
- Feb 24: Non-injury vehicle accident on Amherst Avenue: report filed.
- Feb 25: Vandalism on Kenyon Avenue: report filed.
- Feb 25: Verbal argument on Coventry Road; arrest made.
- Feb 26: Verbal argument on Lake Drive.

Go Get Those Starts!

By Anna Frankfurt

The El Cerrito Garden Club is holding a Spring plant sale, Sunday April 13 from 10am-4pm at the El Cerrito Library parking lot. There will be edibles, native plants as well as pollinator and blooming plants, as well as succulents. In addition, there will be "worm juice" for soil enhancement for sale. All plants are propagated by club members so they will grow around here. Members at the sale will be happy to talk to you about the plants and provide care instructions. All plants will be half price the last hour! 6510 Stockton Ave, El Cerrito, in back of the library. Plentiful parking is available! Cash or check only, exact change and small bills much appreciated! See you there!



The Kensington Community Council is dedicated to the improvement, development, and education of the community, and to the promotion of social welfare in Kensington. It enriches the community by providing educational and recreational programs for all ages and by publishing the Outlook, a monthly newsletter that covers local events and issues. KCC also provides a forum for all Kensington community groups to meet and coordinate their respective efforts toward the common good of the community.

M A Y - 2 0 2 5

DEADLINES

Advertising Deadline ❖ APR. 8
Editorial Deadline ❖ APR. 10

Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are those of the writers and do not reflect the opinion of the Outlook, its editor, or the Kensington Community Council. Letters must be signed and include the resident's phone number and address (which will not be printed). Letters 350 words or under will appear in the print edition (space permitting). Any letter over 350 words will be printed in the online edition only. Publication of letters and articles is subject to space and the editor's discretion. Obituaries of Kensington residents are printed without charge. All material must be received by the 10th of the month preceding issue date: submit by email to editor@kensingtonoutlook.com. No press releases or PDFs; Word documents or text in the body of an email are acceptable.

Use one space, not two, after all periods.

KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

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Letters to the Editor

Berkeley Has the Right Idea
Dear Editor:

At the last fire district board meeting, I spoke, once again, about vegetation management. I am pleased that there is finally some effort by the Parks District along our Wildcat boundary, but my fear is that it is superficial, temporary, and will quickly lose momentum. In my view the board does not consider it a priority—witness that it is consistently placed at the bottom of the agenda at their meetings. Any citizen who wishes to be heard on the subject has to wait two or three hours and suffer through a long list of administrative matters which are of little interest to him—or her—before being allowed to speak.

I inherited my parents' home on Grizzly Peak, and so I am on the radar of the City of Berkeley. They recently sent me a notice: <https://www.berkeleyfiresafe.org/grizzly-peak>. I don't think it was sent out broadly, so Kensington or El Cerrito residents will not have received it. I was struck by the amount of coordinated effort Berkeley is putting into fuel management along the ridgeline. It contrasts sharply with Kensington's lack of effort. I made copies of the Berkeley notice and handed it out to each fire board director at the last meeting on Feb. 19. It remains to be seen whether it makes an impression or whether they take any action as a result.

I think that there is a powerful message here. Berkeley is setting an example that Kensington and El Cerrito need to learn from and act on. Home-hardening is important, but it needs to go hand-in-hand with fuel management.

Anthony Knight
To the Editor:

Superintendent John Gioia presented a plan to secure public ownership of the Kensington Paths that received a very positive reception at the March meeting of the KPPCSD Board. Gioia offered Kensington \$175,000 in county funds over five years to acquire and maintain three of Kensington's 11 walking paths. To assist with repairs, he is asking KPPCSD to make a commitment of \$30,000 per year to a capital fund for future improvement work.

Numerous residents expressed strong support during public comment, and the board voted 5-0 to "direct the general manager to take this proposal to the next steps," working with the county. The paths were created 115 years ago when developers drew pathways onto subdivision maps. Streets were accepted by the county, but paths weren't, making their ownership status murky.

In 2022, Gioia convened a working group that included our Pathkeepers group, KPPCSD Director Cassandra Duggan, and Public Works. We identified three paths (Ardmore, Beloit, Coventry) and crafted a solution for Kensington to acquire these paths without additional taxes. The report is on the web for the KPPCSD March 13 meeting.

The report addresses two concerns about path ownership: liability and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. KPPCSD's insurance will cover liability risks on the paths at minimal additional cost. And because the stated use for these paths is recreational, they meet exemptions to the ADA guidelines at state and federal levels.

It's important to note that Berkeley has 138 paths (many very similar to ours) and is able to maintain them with an annual budget of \$50,000. They partner with the Berkeley Path Wanderers nonprofit, which raises additional funds and oversees volunteer efforts to improve and maintain many paths. Our Kensington Pathkeepers group aims to follow their example. Over the last 115 years our trails and paths have deteriorated, and two are blocked by adjacent property owners. Doing nothing is not an option. If we fail to act now, over time we are likely to further lose access to the paths.

We're grateful to Superintendent Gioia, Director Duggan and many others in the community who have facilitated this breakthrough.

Rodney Paul, Kensington Pathkeepers

KPPCSD Changes its Unwieldy Name But the Change Won't Happen Yet

By Linnea Due

Soon there will be no struggling over the mouthful of Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District, the special district that manages Kensington police, parks and recreation, as well as the garbage contract. As a community services district, the KPPCSD board can offer multiple community services, whereas the Kensington Fire Protection District can only manage fire services, which include emergency medical and rescue operations.

During the process of reorganization, more commonly called consolidation, the fire district will be dissolved, and its contracted services (and the El Cerrito contract), will be absorbed into what is at the moment still called KPPCSD. At the March 1 Town Hall meeting, changing the name of KPPCSD to Kensington Community Services District (KCSDD) was discussed. A couple board members hoped that "public safety" could somehow make its way into the new name, but by the March 13 regular KPPCSD board meeting, that idea had been scotched in favor of the simpler moniker.

Board members at the regular meeting voted unanimously to approve the new name, which will become effective after reorganization is complete. The board also approved applying to Contra Costa LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission) to exercise the KPPCSD's latent powers to provide fire services, including emergency medical and rescue. That too passed unanimously. The reorganization of Kensington's two special districts into one is well on its way as both districts take mandated procedural steps toward completion.

Save the Date for the Hillside Festival

By Dave Weinstein

Enjoy the 11th annual Hillside Festival Saturday and Sunday, May 3 and 4, with more than a dozen hikes and other events scheduled throughout El Cerrito's 100-acre natural wonderland, the Hillside Natural Area. The festival, put on by El Cerrito Trail Trekkers and co-sponsored by the city's Environmental Quality Committee, is free.

Hikes and other events start from trailheads throughout the Hillside and touch on such subjects as native flora and fauna, insects, trees, geology, history and habitat restoration. Our leaders are experts and raconteurs as well. Learn the natural history of our East Bay hillsides. All events are family-friendly and a great day for kids of all ages. See the schedule at www.ectrailtrekkers.org/hillside-festival.html

Seeds and Starts at the Library

By Yumi Kleckner

Enjoy free programs offered by the Kensington Library at 61 Arlington Avenue. Call 510-524-3043 with questions.

Thank you to the Friends of Kensington Library for making library programs possible.

Tues, April 1, 6:30pm Friends of the Kensington Library Friends of the Kensington Library, a 501c (3) nonprofit organization, has worked to improve and financially support library services in Kensington since 1959. Open to all Kensington residents.

Tues, April 1, 6:30pm Castoff's Knitting Club Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month. Open to all levels of knitters. Bring your own yarn!

Tuesdays, April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 6:30pm Family Storytime Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome.

Thurs, April 17, 2-5pm Cloth Produce Bag Sewing Circle Join the Kensington Seamsters Union, local 94707 in transforming donated natural fiber fabric into bags, which will be given out for free at the Kensington Farmers Market. We need YOU to help measure, cut, iron sew and thread drawstrings, and create community.

Tues, April 22, 6:15pm Kensington Library Book Club The club meets online via Zoom, usually on the fourth Tuesday. The selection for April is *The Autumn of the Patriarch* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Tues, April 22, Read to a Dog Join us and a licensed therapy dog for a 15-minute reading session every fourth Tuesday afternoon, 3-4pm. Same day, drop in sign up starts 15 minutes before the read session.

April 2025, Little Free Garden & Seed library The Kensington Library seed library is always being restocked with free seeds of seasonal varieties. We also host the "Little Free Garden" table where anyone can donate or take cuttings, houseplants, crop harvests, bulbs, and garden supplies!

Art Exhibit Artwork by Duane Conliffe: www.dcfoto.co, satellite show of "Art of the African Diaspora", in partnership with the Richmond Art Center.

Passings

Sarah Maria Reynoso-Palley (née Reynoso) passed away peacefully at home in Kensington, surrounded by her family on February 20, 2025, at age 67.



Born August 3, 1957, Sarah was the fourth of five children of Mexican immigrants and the first to go to college. She graduated from Napa High in 1975, UCSC in 1980, and UCLA Law in 1985. She settled in Kensington with her husband and children in 1995.

Sarah began her career in legal aid and then worked for the City of Berkeley for 27 years, rising to Assistant City Attorney and then Director of HR. One colleague described her as "someone we could rely on to get the job done or to give us good advice, no matter what."

Sarah loved travel, baseball, tennis, and the arts. She was an Oakland A's fan, board member for El Cerrito Youth Baseball, and longtime patron of Berkeley Rep. She had a keen eye for design, meticulously realizing her vision for her home and garden on Stratford Road over the years. Her greatest joy, however, was her family.

Sarah is lovingly remembered by her husband Mark; children Amanda (Snyuhe) and Gabe (Sarah); grandchildren Ariana and Jonah; siblings Victor, Clara (Steve), and John (Kristy); sister-in-law Jean; and other cherished family members and friends.

A celebration of life was held at the Berkeley Country Club on March 15. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in Sarah's name to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation or your preferred charity. Full obituary: <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2025/03/05/sarah-reynoso-palley-obituary>.

Kensington Joins Sanctuary Communities

By Catherine Trimbur

At its March 13 meeting, the board of directors of the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPCSD) expressed its commitment, and that of the police department the district manages, to maintaining Kensington as a safe, welcoming and law-abiding community for all persons. The board unanimously passed a resolution that reaffirms the California sanctuary law and shows support for our immigrant community.

The resolution, initiated by Indivisible Kensington and drafted and presented by Director Alexandra Aquino-Fike, notes that "the District is committed to the public health and safety of the Kensington community, which relies on trust and cooperation between all residents and local law enforcement."

Many speakers came to support the resolution, including Reverend Jen Chapman, pastor of the Arlington Community Church; Officer Jose Fajardo, the son of an immigrant and a member of the Kensington Police Officers Association; members of Indivisible Kensington; and multiple Kensington residents. Director Sylvia Hacañ noted that the Bboard does not often have the opportunity to speak out on larger social issues. However, given the Bboard's governance role in public safety, taking this important stand was entirely appropriate and how good it felt to be able to do so. Other speakers noted our country's longstanding and current reliance on the immigrant community, the importance of saying "no" to hate and standing up for vulnerable communities, not giving in to the climate of fear, and in addition to the significance of diversity and inclusivity in Kensington.

With the passage of this resolution, Kensington joins its surrounding communities of Berkeley, Albany, El Cerrito, and Richmond as a sanctuary community.

Aspiring Journalists! Write for the Outlook

High school students: Think you have the chops to cover Kensington? Do you like to discover what makes people tick? Come write for the *Outlook*. You gain valuable experience, meet interesting neighbors, and learn what makes a good lead to a feature article. You can find out what a "nut graph" is—hint, it doesn't involve cashews. editor@kensingtonoutlook.com

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Shred Those Papers May 3

By Johnny Valenzuela
The Kensington Fire Protection District will host a paper shredding event on Saturday, May 3, from 10am-noon at the Unitarian Universalist Church's north parking lot at 1 Lawson Road, Kensington. This free event is for Kensington residents to shred sensitive documents, clear clutter, and learn more about making their homes and communities safer.

It is not necessary to remove staples/clips, etc., from your papers. Shredding is done on-site, and all shredded documents are recycled by returning them to a paper mill. At press date, it's unlikely turning in unwanted medications will be part of this event.

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New Kensington Police Officer Part of Proud Tradition

By Linnea Due

Newly sworn-in Kensington Police Officer Giovanni Gallo-Ruiz wanted to be a psychiatrist when he grew up, and his studies demonstrate that trajectory. He grew up in Santa Rosa, graduated from Montgomery High School in the honors program and went to Santa Rosa Junior College, where he majored in behavioral science. Then he transferred to Sonoma State to do a double major in criminology and sociology.



"My original intent was to do something in psychology, but ten years in medical school was too much." He still wants to get his master's degree, and at age 29 is already thinking about a second career giving psychological exams. "The psychologist who did my review is a police sergeant in Marin County," he explained. All new hires must go through a battery of tests and background checks before they can pin on a KPD badge.

Gallo-Ruiz began at Kensington on January 15. Before then he'd worked at the Contra Costa County sheriff's office, mostly doing operations and transportation duties. He came to Kensington for several reasons: "The small community really appealed to me. I am a community-oriented person, and I like connecting to residents." He also wanted to gain patrol experience, especially in an atmosphere that feels like a small town.

He lives close at hand: "I moved to the Richmond Marina in February to lessen the commute, so I'm really local. I love the East Bay. Love the food!" He lives with his girlfriend, who is also studying to be in law enforcement. "We've been together five years," he said, naming their anniversary, only a couple days away. "I met her in Thailand. She's from Germany, and we were both traveling. She came out here to visit me, and she liked it." She has a student visa to go to San Francisco State, and then she'll be a cadet in the San Francisco sheriff's office. The plan is for her to join the sheriff's force early next year. "That'll help me out with the bills," Gallo-Ruiz said.

So far Gallo-Ruiz said that working in Kensington has been what he expected, that the residents he's come in contact with have been "super welcoming. And I love the views. The views are awesome."

When asked what's been the most exciting so far, he mentioned the subject who barricaded himself in his house. "The next day we caught the guy driving and did a felony stop." A felony stop involves several patrol cars pulling close to the subject car as a loudspeaker demands the driver pull over. "We had to get cover units from Albany PD. And we used the loudspeaker. It was kind of like in the movies. That doesn't happen too often. We had a search warrant on that same house and found a firearm."

Gallo-Ruiz brings the force up to its full complement of ten officers (including Police Chief Mike Gancasz). Gallo-Ruiz will complete his training and become a solo officer by early summer. He carries on a proud Kensington tradition of well-educated, community-minded officers.

5K

...from Front Page

to make the Colusa Circle 5K special for all participants. IBX Fitness led the warm-ups, while Spinning Wheels Forever offered free bike inspections. Well Grounded kept everyone energized with complimentary coffee and hot cocoa, and Olipop provided their healthy probiotic soda for everyone to enjoy. Local businesses generously donated gift certificates for prizes and raffle drawings, including contributions from Benchmark Pizzeria, Fuse Fitness, Raxakoul Coffee & Cheese, Semifreddi's, and many more.

The event showcased impressive athletic performances across all categories. In the adult division, Gill Walton led the men's field with a remarkable time of 17:45, while Adah Epon claimed the women's title finishing in 25:37. Aspen Ross took first place in the gender-neutral division with a time of 37:01. The younger competitors demonstrated equally impressive determination. Among the 12-and-under participants, Livia Leung narrowly edged out Alexander Wetter in an exciting finish, with Leung winning the girls' division in 20:48 and Wetter taking the boys' title just seven seconds later at 20:55. Though no participants competed in the 12-and-under gender-neutral category this year, the enthusiasm shown by all young runners added a special energy to the event.

Zip Code East Bay extends heartfelt thanks to all participants, volunteers, and sponsors who made this year's Colusa Circle 5K a tremendous success.

New Baby? Just Moved to the 'Hood?

The *Outlook* publishes snippets of news about weddings, births, graduations, moves, and more in Neighborhood Notes (150 words maximum). Obituaries are published without charge (250 words max; include a jpg of the person at any age). Please prioritize Kensington connections. Send to editor@kensingtonoutlook.com

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KENSINGTON K-9s

It Takes a Village: From Orphaned Newborns to Frisky Pups Ready for Adoption
By Winston Churchill, Bulldog

I first met Indigo, nicknamed Indy, on the sidewalk in front of Young's Market on the Arlington. She was only three months old, a sleepy puppy cradled in her mother's arms. When I saw her months later, she was happily prancing along the crosswalk, making a simple street crossing a joyful adventure. She made the waiting drivers smile as she skipped along.



Indy is a striking blue merle Miniature American Shepherd (MAS) with one blue and one brown eye. Currently five months old and 15 lbs., she is expected to be about 25 lbs. when full grown. Commonly called Mini Aussies because they look like compact Australian Shepherds, the MAS is a highly intelligent, loyal, and affectionate breed. They are agile, playful, attentive, and athletic. A lover of bright, energetic herding breeds, Indy's mom, Anne, previously had Maxie, a border collie, and Frankie, also a MAS.

Over the years, I regularly saw Indy's mom walking Frankie through the neighborhood. Often, they played with other dog-loving neighbors at Kensington Park. But I hadn't seen them walking past my house in a long while as Frankie experienced health challenges and eventually passed at 15 1/2 years.

Anne was devastated. Frankie had been beside her since Frankie was four months old. Without Frankie, the house felt painfully quiet and the world too lonely. A lifelong dog lover, Anne bonded with animals from the very beginning. Her parents recounted that her very first spoken word was Dita, the name of the neighbor's dog! Over the years, she's always had a dog. But Frankie was her heart dog, keenly attuned to her, supporting her through major life changes.

Anne knew that Frankie would never be replaced, that she would always hold a very special place in her heart. But loving often involves loss and pain. Anne understood that she could embrace both grieving and loving.

After Frankie passed, Anne saw pictures of Indy and her littermates on a breeder's website. She gravitated to Indy because she was the calmest pup in the litter. Sharing the same birthday as Anne, it felt like a sign from the universe that they were meant to be together.



She brought Indy home, and her world changed abruptly. Previously, she was devoted to comfort and elder care; now, her world is turned upside down by puppy care!

Frankie and Indy are unique beings and souls. Parenting them is very different. While Frankie was easygoing and arrived with immaculate house manners, Indy has subjected her mom to a couple rough months of potty-training mayhem and gleeful rug and book-chewing. Frankie was sweet and perfectly behaved while Indy is a mischievous and spirited pup.

Indy loves meeting every creature she sees. And people can't resist saying hello and petting this happy puppy. Anne said that in the few months that Indy has been a Kensington resident, Anne has met more neighbors than she met in 11 years of living here!

Anne knows that she'll grieve Frankie, her heart dog, for many years. But when she cries remembering Frankie, Indy clambers up for hugs and comforts her. Indy reminds her mom that there's enough room in her heart to simultaneously embrace grief and loss, as well as love and laughter.

High School Seniors! Photo Date Set

By Jenny Parks, KCC recreation director
Keep the tradition alive! Calling all high school seniors who live(d) in Kensington, or who attended Hilltop Elementary School for all or part of their elementary school years—you are invited to join other alumni for the annual High School Senior Photo scheduled for Sunday, May 4 at 3:30pm. Location: KCC Office/Recreation Building. Come early to catch up with old friends! The photo will appear on the cover of the June *Outlook*.

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77th Annual Kensington Hilltop Elementary School Carnival

A Day of Fun, Food, and Festivities!

By Laura Vogt

Now in its 77th year, the Kensington Hilltop Elementary School Carnival is a beloved event that promises an unforgettable day filled with exciting games, delicious food, and a strong sense of community spirit. Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 17, from 11am-3pm, and get ready to experience the magic of this long-standing celebration.



Students were asked to share their favorite memories and a fifth grader shared, "I have so many amazing memories but I especially love the ones that include playing games with my friends." So this year, there are new games for just that, playing with friends. New booths include Marble Run Races and Backyard Game Challenges. Plus, we are bringing back crowd favorites with the Dunk Tank, Musical Cakes and Water Balloon Catapult. Along with many of our classic carnival games, there will be endless entertainment for attendees of all ages.

Stop by the Auxiliary Grill and sweet treat food booths if you're craving a classic carnival treat or something a little more substantial. Indulge in fluffy, melt-in-your-mouth cotton candy, savor the refreshing sweetness of an old-fashioned root beer float, or munch on buttery popcorn as you stroll through the festivities. If you're looking for something hearty, the grill will be sizzling with its signature tri-tip sandwiches, hotdogs, hamburgers and veggie burgers. You can pre-order your food beginning May 1 (<https://www.khsparentgroups.org/carnival>).



One of the most anticipated aspects of the carnival is the annual raffle, where lucky participants have the chance to win fantastic prizes, including the Grand Prize: a beautiful, handmade quilt. Plus, local businesses and community members have generously donated a variety of items from bottles of wine to gift certificates for spa treatments. With every raffle ticket purchased, attendees not only increase their chances of winning but also support the PTA and Auxiliary programs and initiatives.

Beyond the food and games, the Kensington Hilltop Carnival offers countless other attractions to keep the fun going. From Deals on Wheels, where children can get their new rides; Hilltop Blooms, plant sales for those with a love of gardening; and face painting that transforms little ones into their favorite characters, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Come for the fun, stay for the memories, and leave with a heart full of happiness. We can't wait to see you there!



High Demand for Financial Help for Vegetation Removal Results in Quick Increase in Grant Funding

By Johnny Valenzuela, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

The Kensington Fire Protection District's hazardous vegetation removal reimbursement grant program has been met with overwhelming interest from residents looking to reduce wildfire risk on their properties. Initially launched as a pilot program with \$10,000 in funding, the program quickly expanded to \$100,000 in February due to high demand.

This initiative has seen applications from all corners of Kensington, from the ridgetop down to Colusa Avenue. Neighbors proactively share information about the program, particularly reaching out to elderly residents to ensure they can participate. Many Firewise communities are coordinating their applications alongside community chipping days to maximize the impact of hazardous vegetation removal efforts.

Over 55 percent of submitted applications focus on removing juniper due to its extreme flammability and fire-spreading potential. Other commonly targeted vegetation includes bamboo, eucalyptus, pampas grass, dead or dying trees, and plants that could obstruct evacuation routes if ignited.

Project costs have ranged from \$350 to \$11,000, depending on the type of vegetation, volume, and complexity of removal. KFPD reimburses up to \$2,000 per parcel, meaning some homeowners invest beyond the reimbursement threshold to further safeguard their properties and neighborhoods.

The application process includes a site visit by the KFPD Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Johnny Valenzuela to verify the project scope and ensure compliance with the program. This grant program is more than just financial assistance—it's a collaborative effort among residents, Firewise groups, and the KFPD to make Kensington a safer, more fire-resilient community.

Enhanced Police Response through New Technology

By Linnea Due

Kensington police will be testing a new technology pioneered in the United Kingdom, where it's been applauded by users. The technology, called GoodSAM, allows callers with a cell phone or computer to video-conference with a police officer.

Few departments in California have access to GoodSAM. Kensington was chosen for a pilot program because of its size and an inquiry to the company from the KPD about how to enhance its services to the public. Said Police Chief Mike Gancasz, "We are excited that GoodSAM offered us the chance to pilot their technology at no cost. In return, they seek ongoing feedback and engagement from us, which will help them refine the product for future deployment across North America"

Residents do not need to download an app. If they call police, they are asked if they would like to video-conference with the officer. A yes puts them in direct video contact. Officers need only 30 minutes training to use the program. Said Gancasz, "This pilot program offers a significant opportunity to improve the efficiency and safety of our operations while providing a valuable service to our community."

The department is now in the testing phase of the program. When fully implemented and if desired, GoodSAM can liaise with other public safety departments such as fire or medical. However, the pilot program, which starts officially on April 1, is limited to the police department.

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Kensington Community Education

Photo: Isi Martinez/Unsplash

KCC Summer Camp still has space available-

KCC Summer Camp remains a beloved tradition for kids in grades K-6, filling summer days with adventure, creativity, and connection. This year, several weeks reached capacity in record time — a testament to how cherished our camp is within the community.

Five years ago, the pandemic paused KCC's summer camp for the first time since its inception in 1951. When camp returned in 2021, it looked a little different: campers wore masks, stayed in separate pods, and our long-standing tradition of weekly field trips came to a halt. But over the years, camp gradually returned to its roots, and this summer, we're thrilled to reintroduce field trips with three exciting outings on the calendar. These weeks were the first to fill up, highlighting just how much this tradition was missed.

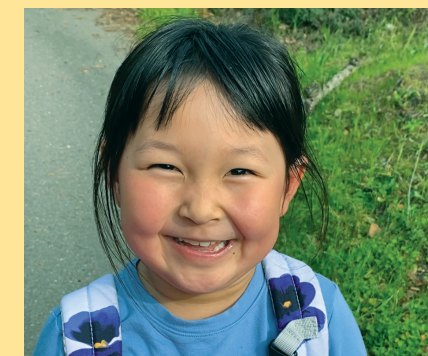
KCC Summer Camp is a special place where local kids make lifelong friends, and campers visiting from abroad — whether on family trips or staying with grandparents — add to the vibrant mix. Many campers return as CITs (Counselors in Training) and eventually become counselors themselves, carrying forward the spirit and legacy of camp.

We're currently accepting applications for camp counselors, open to students in their senior year of high school or older. Plus, there's still room to join the fun — spots are available in weeks 1, 3, 4, and 5. Come be a part of the magic this summer!

KASEP- Kensington After School Program

KASEP

Mark your calendars for the Fall KASEP Registration on Tuesday, September 2nd, 2025. Classes begin Monday, September 8th.



Attention all High School Seniors!

High school seniors who currently live or previously lived in Kensington, or attended Hilltop Elementary for any part of their elementary years, are invited to gather for the annual Kensington High School Senior Photo.

Date: Sunday, May 4th

Time: 3:30 PM

Location: KCC Office / Recreation Building

Arrive early to reconnect with old friends! The photo will be featured on the cover of the June Outlook.



Spring Schedule for Adult and Family Classes



Family Yoga in the Park with Lori Hess

Family Yoga will take place on rotating weekend days @ 10:00-10:45 (kids aged 2 to 5) on the grassy lawn outside the KCC Office/Recreation Building (past the tennis courts).

If possible, please bring a waterproof blanket/tarp, two yoga mats (we will have extra mats available), warm layers, and a water bottle.

Spring dates: Saturday 4/5, Sunday 4/13, Saturday 4/19 and Sunday 4/27. Suggested cost: \$25 per class; Please contact Lori Hess waytoglowkidsyoga@gmail.com with questions about the class.

Register at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/adult-and-family-classes

The Kensington Outlook can now be found at: KensingtonOutlook.com

Archive copies can also be found on our website dating back to 2003. KCC/KASEP Office: 59 Arlington Ave., Recreation Building Kensington CA 94707 E-mail: Info@KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org, or call 510-525-0292. Our website is: www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org.

Follow us on Instagram @KensingtonCommunityCouncil

Cardio Dance with Karma Smart

Fridays 11:30am-12:30

Community Center

Cost \$15 drop in or register online

Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi

Wednesdays & Fridays from 9:30-11:00am

Drop-in fee is \$15

Yoga with Anja Borgstrom

Strength & Balance Yoga -Tuesdays at 8:30am

Cost is \$20 drop in or register online

Slim Chance Circus School - All-Ages Unicycle & Juggling Class

Thursday evenings, 6:00 PM - 7:15 PM

Recreation Building Classroom A (Kensington Park near the flat upper lawn)

Cost: \$20 per person (drop-in). Family discounts available



KENSINGTON EATS OUT

From Sunnyside to Solano Junction: A Neighborhood Breakfast Spot Reborn
By Ittai Shiu

For years, the corner of Solano Avenue and Curtis Street was home to a beloved local breakfast spot—Sunnyside Café. On sunny weekend mornings, it was a familiar sight to see patrons enjoying an omelet and mimosa, soaking in the friendly atmosphere that made this café a neighborhood staple. Sunnyside was more than just a place to eat; it was an integral part of the Solano Avenue community, bringing people together over the simple joy of a well-made breakfast.



Unfortunately, like many other small businesses, Sunnyside Café succumbed to the challenging circumstances that forced too many restaurants to close their doors and I still remember the pang of sadness I felt when I drove past one day and realized that this local institution was no more.

But, as with any great story, an ending can also be a new beginning. Enter RK Dev — an entrepreneur with a passion for hospitality and an impressive global resume managing restaurants and hotels from Abu Dhabi to San Francisco. With the support of his wife, Praveena, and business partner and chef Lila Neupane —both of whom split their time between Solano Junction and the St. Regis in San Francisco — RK saw an opportunity to breathe new life into this cherished location. And so, Solano Junction was born.



Today, the corner of Solano and Curtis is once again bustling with life. Patrons gather under the sun, enjoying breakfast dishes like their stand-out Huevos Rancheros (I prefer with Chirizo) featuring fresh pico de gallo and sour cream. Another must try is the Alameda—a unique breakfast dish with mushrooms, ham, garlic-roasted tomatoes, and Swiss cheese nestled between two slices of savory French toast, topped with eggs, hollandaise sauce, and a balsamic reduction.

For morning meal enthusiasts, the best news is that breakfast is served all day. Whether you're craving pancakes,

omelets, or scrambles, you'll find them available even in the evening on the aptly named "Brinner" menu.

Solano Junction strives to offer more than just breakfast fare. Chef Lila brings a Nepalese touch that straddles the line between hip and traditional. Their momo, stuffed with minced chicken, vegetables, and herbs, is comforting and familiar. The Edamame Sadheko, a pleasant vegetarian option, features edamame marinated in lemon juice, ginger, jalapeno, and tomato. A hidden gem that highlights the Newari culture originating in the Kathmandu Valley is their Bara, a savory black lentil pancake served with Aloo Badi Soup.

The restaurant has been redecorated and outfitted with a full bar, allowing them to

offer a Happy Hour featuring signature cocktails alongside Nepalese Tapas. Splurging on a cocktail alongside a spicy Nepalese snack should not be missed. Try one of their signature cocktails like the "Hoity Toity" paired with the tender Chicken Chhikiuka, fire-roasted with spices, mustard, and cilantro. Also, their Pork Demeko—roasted, spicy pork belly—goes great with any of the beers they have on tap.



Solano Junction is more than just a restaurant—it's a testament to resilience, reinvention, and the enduring love of a great breakfast shared among neighbors. If you haven't yet visited, sip your coffee or cocktail and savor the rebirth of a local favorite.

Solano Junction, 1499 Solano Ave, Albany, CA 94706 (510) 527-5383

Deli

...from Front Page

roll. The favorite cold sandwich is turkey again, this time with arugula, roasted red peppers, balsamic vinegar, plus pesto. Velarde says he is soon bringing back the very popular meatloaf.

Too many meats? There is a wonderful vegetarian sandwich with portabella mushrooms, roasted peppers, onion, plus basic pesto and mayo. All his sandwiches are unique and special. There are two soups a day, all homemade.

Velarde himself is no stranger—he has worked behind the deli counter for 21 years, but now has the opportunity to design his own offerings and cater to his longtime fan base. "The best thing about being in Kensington is that the customers are so nice here," he says. "They know if there is something special that we can help them get it is our pleasure to do so. This is a family business now. My wife Araceli and I work together. In the evenings we talk about the business with our kids. They are still in school, but they want to hear about what we are doing, be part of our family business, and help us."

Velarde and his wife have been married for 20 years. "Owning our own business has been our dream," he says. "I always worked in the front serving customers but now we are learning the back business. Since many of the customers have known me for years, they have been very supportive of us. We have learned a lot, and it is a joy to work with family. It's a dream come true."

Velarde says that he may eventually offer Mexican dishes for takeout, but for now is taking changes slowly. Overall, he says, Kensington is a second home for him and his family. "I love talking to the customers. I really like feedback from customers, whether it is positive or something we can do better. I work for the customer, and I want them to tell me if it is good or could be improved. I like to learn what works for people. I feel like my customers are part of my family."

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