

# Bringing the Community Together

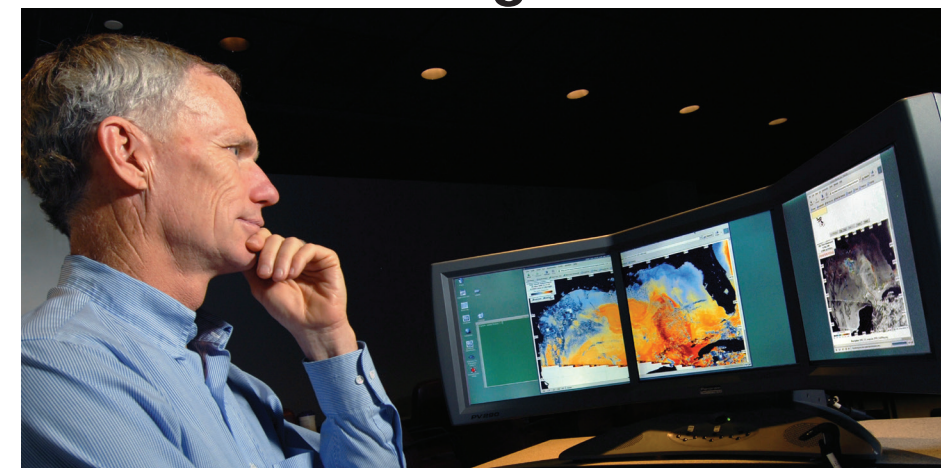
# KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

DECEMBER 2020/JANUARY 2021

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VOLUME 78 NUMBER 9

## Watchers in the Night



Wildcat Watch volunteer Cortis Cooper studies his array of monitors. Cooper and many other volunteers, most of them Kensington residents, watch the feed from cameras that overlook Tilden Park and Wildcat Canyon. At 2AM it can be a lonely business—but the watchers are helping to keep Kensington residents safe from wildfire.

By Linnea Due

Cortis Cooper isn't satisfied with depending on others to ensure his safety. "I live up on the ridgeline which is quite beautiful," he said, "but with the fires in Paradise and Santa Rosa, I became concerned with the threat."

Cooper, now retired after a triple-decade career as a physical oceanographer with Chevron, worked with weather and wave measurements, tracking changes and keeping records. "I started looking at technologies that could help us spot wildfires," he explained.

Cooper soon ran across Alert Wildfire, developed by Dr. Graham M. Kent, a professor at University of Nevada-Reno. The project involves mounting cameras to spot wildfires. "It started four or five years ago," Cooper said, "mainly in Southern California. Then PG&E started installing them in earnest a couple years ago. We checked out several locations.

One was put on top of Vollmer Peak about eight or nine months ago."

That camera looks down on a wide swath of Tilden Park. Another camera focuses on Wildcat Canyon. "We worked with the county fire department, with Chief Lewis Broschard, with Kate Rauch in John Gioia's office, and with John Cornell of the Lafayette Police Department. Each was instrumental in setting up the cameras," Cooper explained.

Cooper learned some surprising things along the way. "It turns out that even though there may be sixty or seventy cameras watching for wildfires in different areas, there aren't fire officials monitoring them constantly. Fire officials simply don't have the manpower to watch all those cameras."

After Cooper got the camera pointed down Wildcat Canyon in September,

[See Wildcat Watch, page 9](#)

## Remote Learning No Picnic

By Linnea Due

Like children in many parts of the nation, Kensington Hilltop Elementary students get up in the morning looking forward—or not—to a day spent in front of a computer, be it tablet or monitor. Teachers at Hilltop teach about 25 kids, some in split classes between grades: a group of second and third graders, for instance, or third and fourth. Not surprisingly, some kids are more adaptable than others to this new and unwelcome accommodation to a pandemic that only seems to be worsening.

Parent Cara Marasco is uniquely qualified to assess the situation. Not only does she have four children, ages 10, 8, 6 and 4, she is a credentialed teacher, having taught kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. Now she stays at home helping her children. "I must say that even with my credential and all my experience," she said, "this is by far the hardest thing I have ever done. All four of my kids are in different grades, they have different teachers, with different systems and how they want things turned in. It's like being a substitute teacher."

To add to the challenges, Marasco points out that there were power shutoffs the first week of school as well as technical glitches. "If I'm not there, there are a lot of problems," she said. "I am always on deck, ready to drop



[See Remote Learning, page 3](#)



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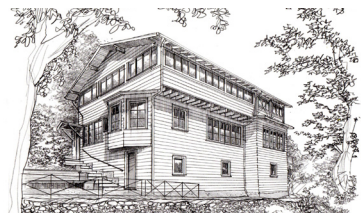
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## Kensington Update

### PENDING

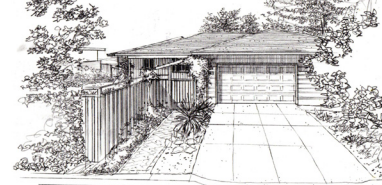


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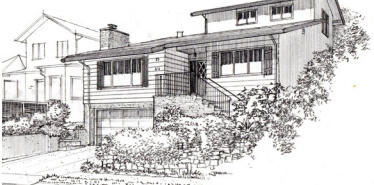


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Editorial Deadline ❖ JANUARY 10

*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.*

*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.*

### K E N S I N G T O N O U T L O O K

EDITOR  
LINNEA DUE  
ADVERTISING MANAGER  
ALMA KEY

PUBLISHER  
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Remote Learning

...from front page

everything and be there in a second. But there are some positives. You can stay abreast of what your child is accomplishing and where they’re struggling. I’m more in tune with what they’re learning. It’s a team between the parents and the teacher. The teachers have to trust that [parents] are not doing the work for the child.”

Marasco said that when she was teaching, every ten minutes or so she’d have the class jump up and run around. “Kids in first and second grades are not designed to be in front of a screen,” she said. “It’s too much stimulus, and in other ways it’s too easy to be distracted. My third and fifth graders seem to be working well. It works better if they’re independent learners.”

She said that part of the problem is scheduling. Smaller groups of children have live time with the teacher; when they’re not working with the teacher, they’re meant to be working by themselves on a project. But they also need to be watching the clock for when they’re supposed to be back on screen. “You can set a timer,” Marasco suggested. “Say you have to be back on in three minutes. You can tweak things to make it work. The older grades can do it better. I will dread next year if my incoming kindergartner has to be online.”

Amy Mullarkey has two daughters, one in eighth grade at Korematsu and a third grader at Hilltop. “My older daughter is doing OK,” Mullarkey reported. “I don’t want to stereotype, but typical teenagers retreat into themselves, so she’s perfectly happy alone in her room all day. My younger daughter loves school, loves her teacher. Just not being able to be there in person every day is the hard part. At the beginning there were a lot of tears that she wouldn’t be seeing her friends.”

Mullarkey had to make a hard choice familiar to many families. “We were asked if we wanted to join a play day pod for my younger daughter,” she said, “but I have an older parent that I visit. I decided that I would rather be able to see my mom. It was a very difficult decision.” Mullarkey arranges socially distant play dates at the park for her daughter: “I make the extra effort to get the social interaction she’s craving.”

Her younger daughter is hanging in there, trying to be excited about her work, Mullarkey said, noting that remote learning requires a lot more of parents. “I have to be sure she’s understanding what she’s taught and turning in her work. Some days I’m sitting close enough by so I can hear what’s going on. Other days it’s a matter of checking in at the end. The added challenge is that my younger daughter is in a split class, second and third graders. The district mandates the number of students in each class. They couldn’t make the numbers work out so that they could have a straight class of third graders and second graders.”

Brenda Lee’s daughter is eight, in the third grade. “Ashlee is doing well, but she misses her friends and social interaction,” Lee said. “There’s a good balance between Zoom and independent work.” Lee brought up an important point: the chasm between March, when remote learning began, and this fall’s classes. “Last year [the children] knew the teacher when everyone had to go to remote learning,” she said. “They’d already had months of in-person classes. This year the teacher did not know the kids.”

She speculated about whether classes could start in-person in January. “The plan has always been to go back sometime in January. It depends on how many cases there are. The district is trying to figure out how to arrange classes. And it’s up to the parents whether to send their child back to school or not. Some say that until there’s a vaccine they’re not comfortable sending their kids back to school. So the district may give everybody a choice. But whatever choice you make you have to stick with the rest of the year.”

All the parents expressed gratitude and concern for the teachers. Said Lee, “I feel for these teachers who have done so much to make it work at home and then to have to turn around and go back into the classroom. It’s a lot to adjust and readjust.”

Fourth grade teacher Anne Dinklage can’t wait to get back to the classroom. “I don’t have a lot of positive things to say about remote learning,” she said. “I would say in general that it’s nice that we have this opportunity to do this experiment and now we know that elementary school does not work remotely. It works at the college level. Maybe it would work in younger grades in a hybrid situation”—partly in-person and partly online.

And the teaching itself? “To be perfectly honest, it’s not at all the same job,” she said. “My husband is a mechanical engineer. Working remotely he’s doing much the same job. For teachers, the job is totally different. We’re not able to connect with kids in the same way, and we can’t create an environment in which to learn and to teach. The tools we use are not age-appropriate. I didn’t use tablets in my classroom.”

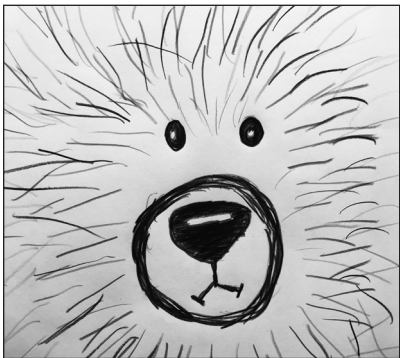
She views education as a collaborative effort. “Having kids on these computers all day just changes the experience with the kids. It’s completely text-based and relies on kids’ ability to read. Even watching a video they have to navigate the platform.”

Dinklage brought up what each parent also emphasized: that remote learning widens the gap between those who have advantages and those who do not, those who learn in one way and those who find this system nearly impossible. Some parents in Kensington have formed pods of three or four students and hired a teacher or other adult to help the children deal with technical problems that inevitably arise—and to stay focused on the task at hand. “Kids that can do it do OK,” Dinklage said. “The kids that struggle just tune into YouTube. We’ve handed a device to students that is full of entertainment and nothing to do with school. It’s like holding a carnival on the playground and leaving the room door open. It’s an impossible act for most families.”

And everything takes longer, for both students and their teachers. “You’d think technology should make it easier, but everything takes three times as long,” Dinklage said. “In the classroom, the first six weeks of school we spend building community. Now that takes three months. I’m working on report cards today. The report card has to be narrative-based.” It’s difficult to assess progress when, as Dinklage describes, it’s hard for many kids to turn in work and tests. “They have to turn it in as a doc or take a photograph of it and turn it in. There has to be support at home.” And although Dinklage did not mention it, the teacher must navigate the various platforms that kids use to turn in work, which takes extra time.

“It’s really a big ask of teachers,” she said. “And tablets that don’t have restrictions are a huge ask of families.”

She talked about whether schools will reopen. “Because our county is now in the orange tier, the state has suggested that schools might start to reopen. [Due to a surge in



Letters to the Editor

Boards and Agencies Must Meet to Solve PSB

Dear Editor:

By the end of the November 11 KFPD board meeting it became clear that after years of multiple and expensive redesigns of the Public Safety Building (PSB)’s seismic upgrade, the directors realized they do not have a workable plan. New plan creation was suspended for one month. Even though police and fire have shared the PSB for fifty years and after hundreds of hours of effort and approximately \$290,000 of KFPD and KPPCSD funds, it was suggested that it might be a good idea to meet with the police and fire chiefs and both general managers (GMs) to sort out requirements by priority. The suggestion was not voted on. For several years the KPOA has recommended that the two boards meet.

There is no place for unilateral decision-making on the PSB. The KFPD owns the building on behalf of citizens who paid for its construction to house both departments. The upgraded PSB must adequately serve the core functions of both departments. The fire personnel Day Room on the second floor has expanded 212 sq ft, but the latest plan reduces PD space by 30 percent to 859 sq ft. One consequence is that police officers would have to run outside and up the hill to get to a vehicle—because they are excluded from the second floor. On Nov 12 KPPCSD GM Bill Lindsay said, “The architect still needs to do more work to meet the needs of the police.”

It is not too late to modify the plan. We are not prescribing specific designs, only raising possibilities. Space can be reallocated without compromising KFD utility. For example, does the KFD day room need to expand when it serves only three fire personnel for a single 48-hr shift once weekly?

Our continued recommendation is for the KFPD and KPPCSD boards, chiefs, and GMs to meet together to compromise and agree upon requirements. We commend the KPPCSD GM’s recommendation for the two district boards to meet. The architect must then be instructed to consult with both districts to create a workable design. Kensington taxpayers cannot foot the bill for two buildings.

**Rob Firmin**  
President, KPOA and KPOA Board of Directors

Bringing Paths to Public Ownership

To the Editor:

The Kensington Pathkeepers are pleased that the KPPCSD is taking a serious look at public acquisition of our walking paths. At their Nov. 12 Board meeting, fifteen residents voiced strong support for the paths and stressed their importance for both recreation and as possible evacuation routes in the event of a wildfire.

KPPCSD President Chris Deppe presented a report on the current state of the paths and options available to our community. Supervisor John Gioia suggested that acquiring a small number of paths at the outset could be a good way to deal with a process that will include performing surveys, working with adjacent property owners, and determining what improvements the paths will need and how they will be maintained.

See Letters, page 9



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## OCTOBER POLICE LOG

**1 ASSISTANCE TO AN OUTSIDE AGENCY**, Mechanics Bank, San Pablo Ave. Eldridge Court resident being scammed requested a KPD officer.

**ANIMAL CALL**, St. Albans Rd. Cold case. Anon RP said that a dog possibly attacked a child and that the dog is vicious toward the public. Unable to locate source of complaint.

**FICTITIOUS INSTRUMENT (BAD CHECK)**, Purdue Ave. RP cashed a fraudulent cashier’s check for \$1980 from a craigslist sale and total loss of funds is \$1000. Later talked to RP and check was for work that was unfinished. Civil matter, no crime.

**BURGLARY**, Stanford Ave. Occurred around 0000 hrs. Unlocked vehicle rummaged through, no damage to the vehicle. Charging cords, registration card taken and proof of insurance. RP would like to provide video footage to KPD of the resp for patrol services.

**THEFT**, Purdue Ave. Occurred overnight unlocked vehicle rummaged through, no damage to the vehicle, nothing of value taken.

**ASSAULT**, Cambridge Ave. Mailman was attacked. Resp 2 juvs.

**2 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE**, Norwood Ave. AFA 70s in green vest claimed she was from an insurance company. Came into res and started taking video recording. RP called landlord and he had no knowledge of what this is about and thought she was poss. casing the house.

**ANIMAL CALL**, St. Albans Rd. Per unk RP, there is a vicious bulldog at the above address that attacked a neighbor 2 days ago, RP would not answer when I asked for her name, she just continually repeated that no one did anything and police aren’t doing anything. I asked her if the neighbor already filed a report she said yes, then I inquired how she knew nothing happened since she was not directly involved, she didn’t respond to that either. When she asked another time if the police were going to do anything, I told her I would dispatch an officer and provide her with CCCAS phone number and she was not pleased with my responses or that she was placed on hold. She hung up when I picked up the call again. Unable to Locate Source of Complaint.

**ANIMAL CALL**, St. Albans Rd. Same RP called back, will not leave her contact information, I asked what the address is for the neighbor who was allegedly viciously attacked by this bulldog and she provided the above address. For clarification I asked if that is where the victim of the dog attack resides too. She repeated that is where the vicious dog is, she is adamant about having an officer respond to the above address and do something about the dog...this is 2 days cold, RP is not involved and nothing is occurring today.

**ANIMAL CALL**, St. Albans Rd. Same RP called again for the same issue, she does not provide any further information, she was not involved in the alleged vicious dog attack, nothing is happening today, she is upset and keeps bringing up she is placed on hold regularly even after explaining there is only one dispatcher on duty at a time w/multiple tasks. She asked what it means when I told her an officer has been dispatched I attempted to answer and she talked over me. I clarified that is not what I had said, at that time I had to place her on hold again to answer another call and when I picked up her call she had hung up again.

**DISTURBANCE OF PEACE**, Kensington Mechanics Bank. Verbal, refusing to leave and asked RP to call the police. Request for police cancelled.

**5 MISC CIVIL MATTER**, Stratford Rd. Subject went into RP’s backyard and talked to a contractor for approx. 40min that RP hired. RP does not want her entering into her yard.

**MISC CIVIL MATTER**, Anson Way. Per RP the subject keeps driving by the res at an extreme high rate of speed and yells profanities, ongoing issue because RP has signs that say slow down.

**6 GRAND THEFT**, Windsor Ave. RP’s father was contacted by someone claiming to be associated with Bank of America, asked that he wire over \$50,000 and he did. RP is with father at his res now. RP would like for officers to give her call.

**DANGEROUS OR GRAVELY DISABLED PERSON**, Arlington Ave. WMA, 50s, no shirt, tan pants, angry demeanor threw lid from neighbor’s trash can and threw a concrete block into the street, l/s near crosswalk by round-about outside PD possibly crossing to west side of the street.

**8 PERSON SEEKING ADVICE FROM PD**, Valley Rd. RP purchased items through an online store from China and the items do not look anything like the photos online...RP has contacted the business. They told her she needs to ship it back to the China address and pay all the shipping, customs costs etc., but the item was shipped from an address in SF. RP would like a call back for advice.

**12 VANDALISM**, Lexington Rd. Property damage on RP’s front lawn from a bulldozer possibly belonging to resident at Ocean View Ave.

**GRAND THEFT**, Trinity Ave. Theft of a catalytic converter.

**SUSPICIOUS PERSON/S**, Purdue Ave. Male subject ifo RP’s residence hanging around his trailer and the neighbor’s house, never seen the subject before. AMA, 30s 600, heavysset unk clothing l/s on foot s/b on Purdue no weapons seen. Unable to Locate Source of Complaint.

**13 DISTURBANCE OF PEACE**, Cowper Ave. Noise complaint- ongoing for the last 25 mins possibly hammering or a machine. Disputing Parties Separated-Matter Resolved.

**15 VEHICLE THEFT**, Sunset Dr. RP’s vehicle stolen sometime overnight.

**16 PERSON SEEKING ADVICE FROM PD**, Beloit Ave. RP rec’d a package and it was opened, some contents were taken...RP would like to know what should be done next.

**18 HIT AND RUN** - Property Damage, Yale, Spruce. Per BPD they rec’d a call of a blk BMW 2 door partial plate swerving all over the rd l/s s/b on Spruce.

**20 DISTURBANCE OF PEACE**, Cambridge Ave. Verbal. Almost hit RP’s wife with car. Aggressive. Situation corrected by PD.

**21 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE**, Highland Blvd. Possible roommate/friend walking up and tried knocking on the door now entered the house and refusing to leave. No restraining order on file. No weapons seen, in the side bedroom possible that the owner of the house owns firearms. Disputing Parties Separated- Matter Resolved.

**GRAND THEFT**, Highgate Rd. Cold. Catalytic converter theft.

**22 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE**, Kensington Mechanics Bank. Two WMAs 20s wearing heavy coats standing ifo the bank for the last 5 mins. hanging out in the lobby, took pictures of the bank then were acting nervous possibly casing the office. Officers responded and contacted the known subjects.

**PERSON SEEKING ADVICE FROM PD**, Highgate Rd. RP’s wife was outside talking to a contractor for an estimate of possible work to be done, neighbor yelled over the fence and threatened to call PD for not having permits for possible work being done...RP would like a call back. .

**24 ENTER & OCCUPY PROPERTY W/OUT CONSENT OF OWNER**, Highland Blvd. RP found a male subject walking through the front yard. Subject kept saying “it’s OK it’s OK, cell phone cell phone” and immediately ran from the RP n/b on foot Arlington. HMA, 40s, 508, white overalls, no weapons seen. Situation Corrected by PD.

**25 911 CALL**, Purdue Ave. Four shots heard ifo residence.

911 CALL, Willamette/Grizzly Peak. 7 ago. Catalytic converter theft interrupted, WMA late 30’s to early 40’s, 510, stocky bld, jacket and white t-shirt, lying under a Toyota Prius, he rolled out from under the vehicle and then he followed RP around the area and fired shots out of his driver’s side window with a hand gun. RP was not hit.

**28 ENTER & OCCUPY PROPERTY W/OUT CONSENT OF OWNER**, Edgecroft Rd. Occurred yesterday while RP was away...someone came over RP’s fence and cut down her maple tree, thinks it is someone from the apt house behind her on the Arlington.

**29 Fictitious Instrument (Bad Check)**, Highgate Rd. RP rcvd a fraudulent check from a Kensington resident for a interior paint job for \$1300.00.

**30 GRAND THEFT**, Edgecroft Rd. Interrupted catalytic converter theft. Responsibles drove away towards Coventry - 4d SUV white Suburban. Occupied X2 HMA’s one wearing white shirt or cream color resp had a handgun silver slide.

**31 VEHICLE TAMPERING**, Willamette Av/Highland Blv. Big white Ford Econoline w/blue stripe van. RP initial reported that he saw persons stealing a catalytic converter from a Prius, he then said he did not see them steal it but saw person at the Prius. RP does not have a descrip. No LP#. LP may begin with a 5. Subjects corner of Kenyon/Westminster. Report is Unfounded.

**ASSISTANCE TO AN OUTSIDE AGENCY**, Area 5 at Buchanan. RP called in to report his relative was missing and that he located her car at the parking lot of Area 5. An area check located the missing relative face down in the water at the beach area. Subject, who appeared to have committed suicide via drowning, was unresponsive despite extensive lifesaving efforts. EBRPD took over the investigation.



Photo by Jesse Montoya.

## How Neighbors Saved Halloween

By Serena Heaslip

How can we make Halloween fun in the time of Coronavirus? Parents of families with young children on Ardmore Road exchanged a flurry of emails on this topic. By October 29 a parade came together; it was last-minute so not everybody heard the news, and no one could guess what the turnout would be.

But at 5pm on Halloween, about thirty costumed children and their adults showed up at the parking lot at the top of Ardmore Road. A festive mood was in the air as each family group walked through a garden transformed into the world of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* and then set off on a parade along Ardmore Road sidewalks.

Coronavirus precautions were taken: masks worn, physical distance kept, and treats were laid out individually in bags or cups. Because of physical distancing, it turned out not to be a typical parade, more like organized trick-or-treating.

But everyone had fun! The children were filled with delight. Many homes were decorated, and neighbors came out to watch, wave, and supply treats. Overheard at the parade: kids—“I’ve got more candy than I’ve ever gotten!” Parents—“It feels so great to be doing something almost normal, maybe even better than most years.” Neighbors—“This makes me so happy!”

Thank you everybody, you saved Halloween!



## Season of the Witch

By Lisa Chase

The Colusa Circle Merchants Association (CCMA) created a Where’s the Witch scavenger hunt throughout October to celebrate Halloween. Kids were encouraged to search participating CCMA business storefronts for witches using a special map. Once they found all the witches, they redeemed their maps at Benchmark Pizzeria for a free soft serve. Over thirty children participated!

Searching for some holiday sparkle? Be sure to check out the CCMA holiday tree lights on the Circle’s oak tree, which will be illuminated throughout December and into the New Year.

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# Cell Phone Users, Listen Up!

By Eileen Nottoli, KPPCSD director

Recently, a resident called 911 from a cell phone to report a fire. Instead of directing the call to Kensington Fire via our dispatch in Albany, the call was directed to the California Highway Patrol (CHP) with a resulting delay. The problem with calling 911 from cell phones is long-standing and nationwide.

When someone calls 911 from a traditional landline (a phone connected via wires rather than over the Internet), the dispatch center will show the number and address of the phone. The dispatcher can locate the caller even if the caller can't speak or doesn't know where he is. Calls from mobile phones, however, are not associated with a fixed location. These calls are often directed to the CHP instead of local emergency responders.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is working to ensure that wireless 911 calls are transmitted with increasingly precise location information so that first responders can quickly find and assist those in need.

Until then, in an emergency, cell phone users should call local police dispatch and not 911. Let the dispatcher know that the call is an emergency and give them your cell number in case you get disconnected.

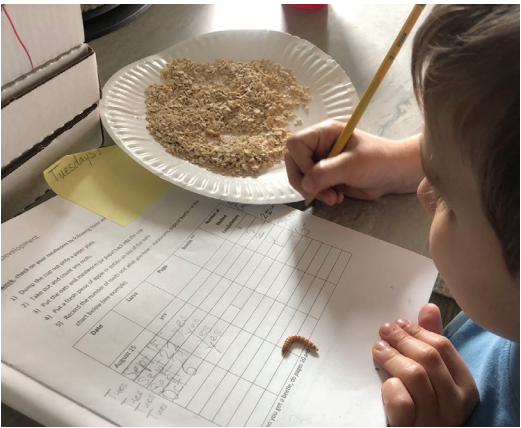
If you are phoning from a cell, call (510) 526-7573 instead of 911 for emergency services. Dispatch should also be used for all other calls for police service. Please do not call the KPPCSD district office number (510) 526-4141 for police service because those calls will sometimes go to voicemail. Calling (510) 526-7573 will result in faster police and fire response.



## Remote Learning

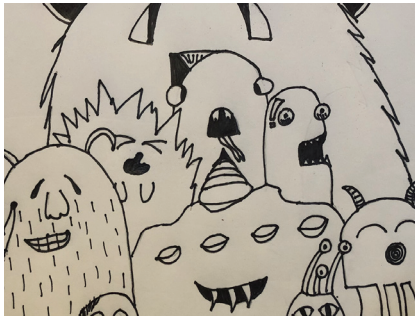
*...from page 3*

cases since this interview, Contra Costa County moved back into the purple tier.] But the takeaway is that's not happening anytime soon. Our union has been very clear about the requirements needed to reopen. Schools that are attempting a hybrid model will need more staff to cover everything." She noted that every zip code in the district must have a low infection rate for any school in the district to reopen. "And then each site has its own needs, such as ventilation and cleaning. Staffing is a huge challenge. And there are simple things. For example, where will kids eat lunch? The classes would have to stick together but sit six feet apart. A class could not intermingle with other classes. I told people in parent conferences that we should be expecting to do [remote learning] all year."



Hilltop students enjoy a huge plus: the Kensington Education Foundation's art, music and science classes. Kensington residents support KEF through fundraising efforts such as the annual Garden Party (cancelled this year). KEF quickly stepped into the Zoom universe with its own programs.

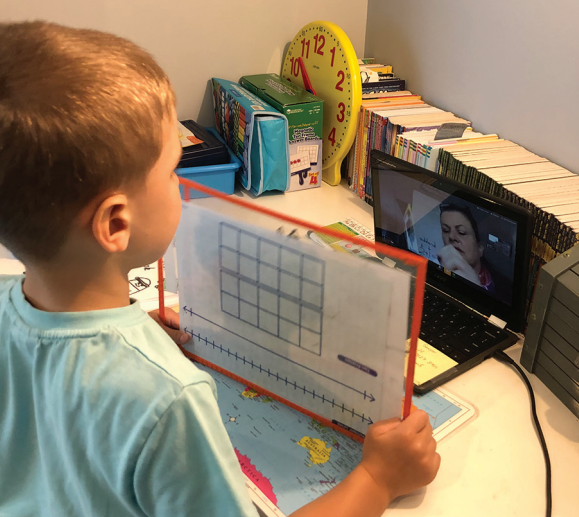
Mullarkey has been involved with KEF for about seven years. She said KEF contracted with a company to host live music classes each week. KEF also provided art kits for each child that includes paper, pastels, pencils, and more. Science gets a boost with special kits and lessons for every child. "The younger kids got mealworms to take home and watch change," Mullarkey said. "The mid-age students dissected owl pellets. And the sixth graders got a unit on weather. Now we're on to a new unit—growing seeds for K-5, while the sixth graders do desalinization and water evaporation."



Mullarkey has nothing but compliments for hard-working teachers. "They spend so much time trying to make things engaging for the kids. Credit them with being able to turn on a dime."

Lee also supports KEF. "On Fridays they have science or art every other week. Every week we have music. Our art teacher tapes a video that they can follow with their artwork. She might read books to the kids on the topic they're drawing, or she'll talk about what they're seeing. Look at the shadowing of this bear, look at where it's facing, to give them a different perspective of the artwork. The artwork that the children have done is amazing."

Marasco has set up a running and walking club to get children outside in the fresh air and away from their computers. Kids can chart their progress, and Marasco awards certificates to those who keep up the pace. In a difficult situation, Hilltop parents and children are making do. But each mentioned how lucky their kids are. Said Marasco, "The equity issue is really difficult. At the beginning I thought that maybe we could pair up kids from other schools with my own kids [virtually]. But then you think of all the schedules. Different schools have different hours and times for doing things."



"Basically it's widening the gap," Dinklage said. "Being with kids is actually the best part of my day. But I don't think it's the best part of their day. I'm impressed by some of the students who are able to do it. But most kids that age need a lot more support."

*You can donate to KEF at [www.kensingtonhilltop.org/parent-groups/kef/fall-pledge/](http://www.kensingtonhilltop.org/parent-groups/kef/fall-pledge/)*



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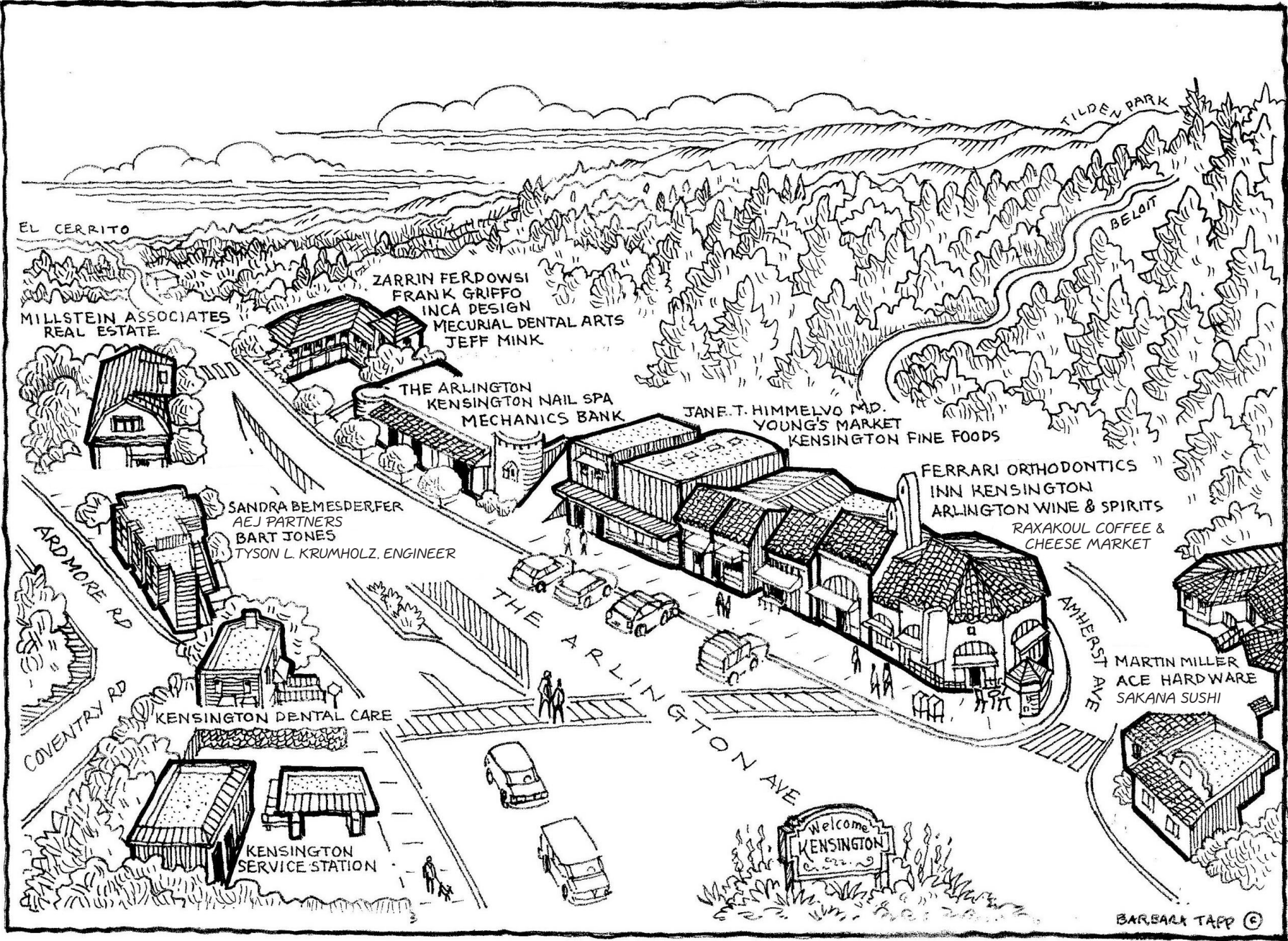
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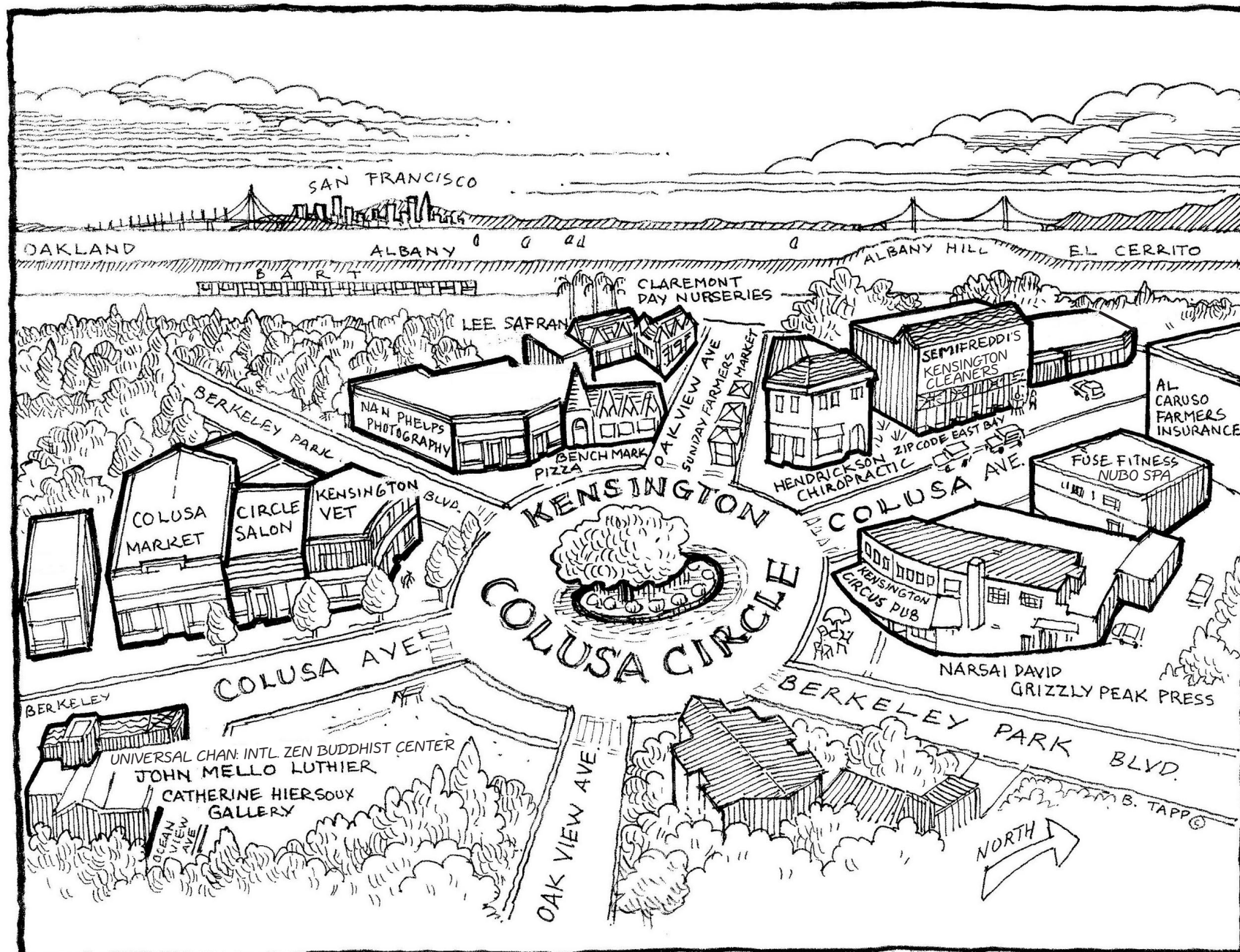
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Community Education

KASEP

Kensington Afterschool Enrichment Program

We are continuing our virtual enrichment classes and we would like to thank the community for their continued support of KASEP throughout this stressful year. As we plan for 2021, we are optimistic and hopeful that we will be able to add more in-person classes, as well as, continue our virtual classes through the winter and spring months. We have already started planning safe and sustainable ways that we can move forward with our always awesome summer camp. Registration for our winter KASEP session will begin on December 8th at 7pm. Classes resume January 11th.  
You can register online at [KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/Kasep](http://KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/Kasep)

KASEP Virtual Classes Continue in January 2021

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We will continue offering in-person Tennis, Judo and Dance Fitness classes and hope to introduce more in-person classes as we can safely and as the weather permits.



KCC

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Adult Classes

Adult Art Classes with April via Zoom

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**Honeycomb Orbs and Festive Leaves**

December 16th @ 7pm

**Needlefelt Wool Ornaments** December 9th 6:30-8pm

Create your own needlefelt ornaments for the holidays. Learn techniques to create shapes and details and discover how to "write" with yarn! Participants have the option to purchase a kit or supply their own materials from the list provided. Ages 12+, all levels welcome! \$34 plus optional supply fee



We will be offering Yoga in the Park on Tuesday and Thursday mornings starting January 5th at 8:30am. You can register online or call our office for more details.  
Register at [KensingtonCommunityCouncil.Org/adult-classes](http://KensingtonCommunityCouncil.Org/adult-classes)

Tennis Court Reservations: For weekends and holidays only, beginning at 9am.  
Call the KCC office for info. Court Fees: 45-min. singles reservation: Residents: \$2

KCC/KASEP Office: 59 Arlington Ave., Bldg. E (Across the grassy field above the tennis courts in Kensington Park), Kensington CA 94707. E-mail: [kccrec@yahoo.com](mailto:kccrec@yahoo.com), or call 525-0292. Our website is: [www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org](http://www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org).



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## Letters

From page 2

The paths were created over a hundred years ago when Kensington was subdivided into parcels. But the county failed to take ownership then, and their legal status has since been unclear. Two paths have now been blocked by adjacent property owners, and we’re concerned that access to others will be lost. We see local public agency ownership as the responsible way to protect and improve the paths for future generations.

Because it already owns Kensington Park and one path, we believe that the KPPCSD is in the best position to take ownership. Some members of the board have voiced concern that doing so would expose the district to liability. But injury claims related to the paths have been rare, and in our current situation, much of the liability is assumed by adjacent property owners and the volunteers who maintain the paths, which is a disincentive to allowing access and freeing the paths of vegetation and other debris. And the report noted that the district’s current insurance could cover the paths at no additional cost.

Our group is committed to overcoming the obstacles to public path acquisition and hope to work in partnership with KPPCSD to get this done. This board has an opportunity to succeed where other boards have not. Doing so will improve our community and address a key safety need.

Rodney Paul



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## Leslie Reckler Wins Tight Race

By Linnea Due

Kensington resident Leslie Reckler identified a window in her life in which to run for the school board—something she’d wanted to do for years. As a past PTA president, volunteer, committee member, and more, Reckler has been part of the West Contra Costa Unified School District for more than a decade. Now, after a hard-fought campaign, she looks to have unseated incumbent Tom Panas to serve on the board, representing Area 5 (Kensington, El Cerrito, Richmond Annex, Point Richmond, Richmond Marina, and unincorporated East Richmond Heights). Results become official at the election’s certification, expected on or about November 30.

Three incumbents decided not to run for the five-member board, so Reckler joins three other new faces and just one old-timer: Mister Phillips, who represents Area 3 (Richmond, North Richmond, San Pablo, and Rollingwood). “It’s a lot to take in,” Reckler said of the razor-thin margin of victory. “But it wasn’t a surprise, because when we started doing this it was very data-driven. We expected it to be close. It’s hard to unseat an incumbent who is so well known.”

Reckler’s son graduated from El Cerrito High and attends UC Berkeley, while her daughter now goes to El Cerrito High. Reckler felt it was important for a candidate to have children in the district. “All my experience was leading up to this,” she said. “I had wrapped up my professional career and was ready to do something else. I knew this was my time. I couldn’t have waited another two years.”

Reckler worked for more than two decades in retail buying and merchandising. “It’s not unlike a school district,” she said with a laugh. “In business, you have the home office and stores, while in the district you have the downtown office and the schools. Budgeting is done the same way, new programs are like introducing new items, and you need marketing. The structure always made sense to me.”

With the search for a new superintendent, the pandemic, financial crunch, and a new system of apportioning seats, challenges abound. Reckler explained that the West Contra Costa district and “almost every school district in California” was served with a demand letter to convert representation from district-wide to trustee areas. “A major objective was to give minority voices a greater shot at being heard,” Reckler said. “It’s going to be very interesting to see what happens. It does give a chance for each area to raise its voice more. But I feel that we should represent all the children in the district. It’s true that you could not be as responsive to parents who are not in your area. But I have no intention of doing that.”

Reckler is embracing the new, tempered with the old. New faces, a new system, but with all of Reckler’s work in the district, “Yes, there are four new people on the board. The good news is that I’ve known almost all of them for years. We have familiarity with the way we each operate. We already have a common respect. And we have very diverse opinions. I am really excited to get started.”

Watch for updates on Reckler’s work in future Outlooks.

### Wildcat Watch

...from front page

he began reaching out to set up a volunteer network to watch for fires, a network he dubbed Wildcat Watch. He realized that staring at a screen for an hour or so over a 24-7 period would soon tire volunteers, so his team devised guidelines. “We factor for wind and Red Flag Warnings.” The team is activated during Red Flag Warnings if the winds are expected to reach over 20 mph. “We had a red flag a few weeks ago,” he said. “The worst winds lasted about two days. We had forty continuous hours watching. This last one we had about eighteen hours.”

Each volunteer puts in an hour-long shift, emailing the next volunteer ten minutes before the end of his or her shift. If there is no response, a text is sent. Then a phone call. If still no response, a backup subs in. At worst, the one whose shift is over stays on until someone can be found. But, said Cooper, “We’ve had sixty hours of watch so far, and we’ve had nobody not show up.”

This is a neighborhood group of about sixty volunteers, the majority Kensington residents, built for redundancy and resiliency. A subset of the team created a training manual, a careful 1-2-3 of what to do and who to call if a fire is spotted, including someone who lives off the ridge who will take over handling the threat. “If a fire starts and the volunteer is on the ridge, we want the watcher to report it and then get out,” Cooper said. He said that he’d heard estimates that a fire starting in Tilden could reach the ridge in fifteen minutes. The team has factored in a scenario where if the power goes out during someone’s shift, or the secondary can’t be reached. The team has, it seems, thought of just about everything.

The team came up with most of this on their own. They couldn’t find material online about how to coordinate such a volunteer force or what protocols to develop. “We kind of had to do it from scratch,” Cooper said. “It’s been a community effort.”

How did he contact volunteers? “I started reaching out to people I’d met through CERT and other organizations,” he said.

Cooper said that no one shirking their shifts—even those at 2 and 3am—is a “huge testament to the diligence and honesty of our neighbors. We put up a blank schedule on the site and people sign up for shifts. The 3am shift stays empty for a few hours. But then it gets filled.”

Cooper admits it’s not much fun to get up in the middle of the night and stare at a dark screen. “We are trying to keep it to a minimum,” he said. “We don’t start a watch unless the winds are over 20 mph and coming from the north to east, a wind that would push a fire from Tilden right up to the ridgeline. We’ll probably have four to five days a year that we’ll match this [24/7] threshold.”

He thinks of the network of volunteer watchers as an interim step: “There is work being done on computer automated detection systems. So we’ll be out of a job in a few years. A computer being fed these video links will detect likely fires.” But until that’s a proven technology, Wildcat Watch is on the job. “People depend on us,” Cooper said. The watch could provide extra minutes that could save lives—or even put out a fire before it begins its deadly work.

To volunteer in the wee hours (or others), go to <https://wildcatwatchgroup.blogspot.com/>, click on the red (then blue) words “volunteer here” on the home page, and fill in the form. To see the cameras in action, go to the website and access Tools. Both cameras (as well as others such as downtown Berkeley and Briones) can be viewed.





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# Incumbents Carry the Day

By Linnea Due

Election results were quick to come in from the Contra Costa County election offices, unlike in some parts of the country. For the two director seats on the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District board, incumbents Sylvia Hacaj (2041 votes) and Eileen Nottoli (1723) won 65 percent of the vote between them. Lynn Wolter (1023) finished with 18 percent and Elaine Stelton (942) with 17 percent. The KPPCSD contest attracted about 900 more voters than the Kensington Fire Protection District race.

In the KFPD election, Larry Nagel (1964) emerged the clear winner, with 40 percent of the vote, while Don Dommer and Jim Watt fought out a close contest, with Dommer (1513) edging out Watt (1386).

Kensington resident Leslie Reckler won a very tight race against Tom Panas and Carolyn Wysinger for Area 5’s West Contra County Unified School District board member.

Directors serve without pay in a job that often gobbles up enormous amounts of time and energy. When you see your directors (and their challengers) about town, give them a socially distant thumbs’-up for volunteering for a difficult task.

# Passings

**Sumner Marshall** February 2, 1933–October 26, 2020

We have lost an amazing man. Sumner Marshall was a beloved father, grandfather, husband, physician, and teacher, whose spirit radiated warmth, compassion, and humor to all he encountered. Sumner was born and raised in Gloucester, MA, and graduated from Harvard College and Cornell Medical School. In 1961 he traveled to California with his wife, Hermine, to complete his urology residency at UCSF. They moved to Kensington in 1964. While helping to raise three sons, Sumner practiced urology in Berkeley for the next 35 years, where he set his pediatric patients at ease by telling them he was “The Cookie Doctor” because he gives cookies instead of shots. He was a talented surgeon with an inventive flair. For over fifty years, he was also a beloved teacher at UCSF.



After Sumner retired, he traveled the world with Hermine and loved capturing the essence of his experiences in detailed journal entries. Always an optimist, Sumner lived by his favorite maxim: “It’s the best of all possible worlds.” One of his greatest delights was telling stories to his grandchildren, especially creating wild adventures of Curious George that always seemed to include chocolate bananas. Although he missed seeing his first great-grandchild by a month, his multi-generational love remains in our hearts.

Predeceased by Hermine by six weeks, he will be deeply missed by his sons Randy, Gregg, and Brad, his three daughters-in-law, brother David, eight grandchildren, numerous relatives, friends, and colleagues, and a myriad of former patients and students. A memorial will be held later. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to the Nature Conservancy or Doctors Without Borders.



Leela Kiyawat (left) and Cate Flowers (right) hard at work at the Community Center November 3. Photo by Mari Metcalf.

# Kensington Teens Help Out at the Polls

By Linnea Due

When El Cerrito High junior Cate Flowers heard about Poll Heroes, she contacted the Contra Costa County Elections Department to volunteer to work at the poll. As a Kensington resident, she was stationed at the Community Center on November 3. “I can’t vote in this election, but I wanted to do something to help,” Flowers said.

Poll Heroes, begun by Princeton students, high school students in Denver, and others, says on its website: “We had observed the [primary] election disasters in Wisconsin and Georgia and came to appreciate that a lack of poll workers—typically older Americans who are at a higher risk of serious complications from Covid-19—was one of the driving forces behind these debacles.” The group came up with the idea of recruiting college and high school students to work at polls across the country. Flowers answered the call.

“Elections are how America is America,” Flowers said. “Voting is important because that’s how people have a voice in how the country is run. Part of the reason I volunteered is that I know a lot of older people are poll workers, and a lot of those people wouldn’t be comfortable working during a pandemic. I thought it was the least I could do.”

Leela Kiyawat had a similar trajectory. A senior at Oakland School for the Arts, she received an email forwarded from her neighbor. “It was asking high school and college students to come volunteer for the election because of COVID precautions,” Kiyawat said. “I’m seventeen, so I can’t vote. I signed up on the Contra Costa County website. I had to go to a couple of trainings, one online and one in person.”

One of the best things that happened is that she got to see Flowers. “I hadn’t seen her since fourth grade,” Kiyawat said. Kiyawat’s family moved to Kensington when she was seven, and she attended Hilltop until she began attending the Oakland School for the Arts in fifth grade. “We’re both super nerdy,” she said of herself and Flowers. “We talked about books most of the time. We had just read *Mrs. Dalloway*.”

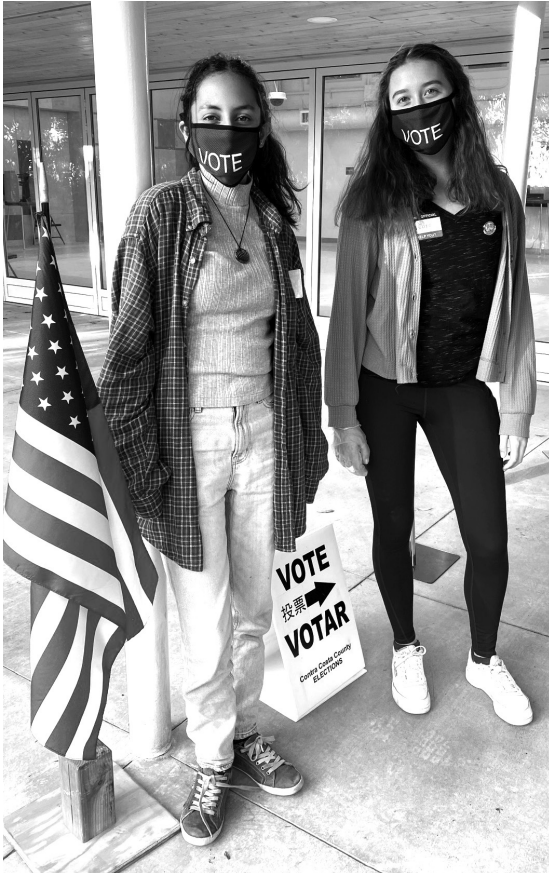
The two were able to have lengthy discussions about Virginia Woolf because not that many people voted in person, so the very long day—from 6am-9pm—featured stretches of inactivity. Flowers said, “Most people came in to drop off their ballots. Some did vote in person.”

Kiyawat said that some were confused why they had received a ballot through the mail. “They wanted to fill in a regular ballot and used their mail-in ballot as a cheat sheet. They were very concerned that their vote would count.”

Both Kiyawat and Flowers mentioned Poll Pads, a new innovation. “They used to have these huge registers, and you’d look up the voter’s name on the register,” Flowers said. Many older in-person voters will remember lines backing up as poll workers struggled to find the person’s name in an enormous book. Now Poll Pads (like iPads) have replaced those registers so the worker would look up the person’s name on the county database, and the voter would sign in with a stylus. This meant that anyone in the county could vote at any poll location.

Kiyawat said that the day, long as it was, provided a break. “We traded a lot of stories and ate a lot of biscottis. It was a restful day from the news cycle. We weren’t allowed to watch news or discuss politics. Someone came in wearing a shirt that said ‘Republicans Suck’ and we couldn’t show any expression. People would say things to us, and we couldn’t even nod. That was kind of awkward sometimes.”

But there were cookies that Flowers had made the night before, pizzas brought in by Eyleen Nadolny, Tom Dean, and David Bergen, and good conversation all around, none of it about politics. Sounds like a respite indeed.





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# Market Endures Despite Missing Holiday Fetes

By Karen Yencich

This Halloween at the Kensington Farmers’ Market was a ghost of Halloween celebrations past. “We only gave out 100 pumpkins to the kids,” said Chris Hall (AKA El Jefe), the farmers’ market manager. In a typical year the market passes out about 200 pumpkins. “There were not a lot of kids this year, for obvious reasons.”

There was no children’s Halloween costume parade around Colusa Circle, a tradition the market launched nearly ten years ago, no costume contest, and no pumpkin carving. Vendors suited up for the holiday as always, although the need for masks put a damper on some of the more elaborate costumes.

But even though COVID restraints made it seem like a glass-half-empty kind of day, the glass was, in fact, well over half-full, as shoppers made the most of the opportunity to greet their neighbors under the cover of their (not Halloween) masks.

At the beginning of the pandemic, it looked like the market would have to be shut down entirely. But the outdoor venue, and a health department “essential service” designation, kept it up and running.

In order to meet the social distancing requirements set out by the Health Department, Hall had to cut the number of vendors by thirty percent; the number of shoppers in the market also had to be limited. He opened the market an hour earlier to make room for everyone who wanted to shop. Masks were required. A hand-washing station and sanitizer were placed at the entrance. Vendors reconfigured their booths to limit contact with their products and produce, with shoppers and each other. Every booth offered hand sanitizer. “Shopping outdoors is safer,” Hall pointed out, “and we’ve tried to help people to feel as safe as we can.” An attempt to reactivate socially distanced music by moving the bandstand out to the Colusa Circle oak was fun, but ultimately unsuccessful.

In the end, the market has never closed. Neighbors stepped up to the plate. They masked up, kept their distance as they shopped, kept their visits short, shopped for friends, and left the kids at home. The market has been able to continue to serve the Kensington community, and the community has been able to serve the Market—an important distinction, because for many of the vendors, the Kensington Farmers’ Market is their only remaining commercial venue.

Still, Hall regrets the holidays we’ve missed this year—Valentine’s Day and Easter (no Easter Bunny) and Mothers’ Day, although the market was still able to offer the traditional Mothers’ Day gardenias to moms.

On the horizon, we’ll miss Thanksgiving celebrations (no pie contest), Christmas (no Santa, no Grinch) and Chanukah. Also among the missing: the bands and tap-dancing lessons. The market was a place to make the scene, shop for the week, visit with the vendors and see what your neighbors were up to. But, as Chris says, “We look forward to getting the party going again in the New Year!”



Photo by Karen Yencich

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We took the Colusa Circle 5K virtual this year and raised \$2500 for the Richmond non-profit Urban Tilth: [urbantilth.org](https://urbantilth.org)

Our team has worked through the pandemic, giving 100% to our clients, community and craft.

We continued our community education initiatives by hosting two virtual workshops: *Creating Your Eco-Friendly Home* and a *2020 Real Estate Market Q&A*. [zipcodeeastbay.com/workshops](https://zipcodeeastbay.com/workshops)

As a Giveback Homes Brokerage Partner, we donated funds from every closing to help build homes for those in need.

We launched ZCEB ECO with our first ever ZCEB ECO listing in Kensington. This new green listing program aims to make every home we sell greener. Learn more at [zipcodeeastbay.com/eco](https://zipcodeeastbay.com/eco).

We welcomed local REALTOR® David Hiller-Bateau to our team.

Our agents closed 45 transactions totaling over \$45M in sales\*. To check out our recent sales and curent listings, visit [zipcodeeastbay.com/selling](https://zipcodeeastbay.com/selling)

\*as of 11/8/20

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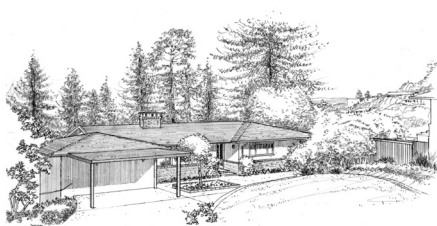
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# Kensington Eats Brings It Home

By Linnea Due

Every other Thursday night, Ittai Shiu heads to a restaurant chosen the week before and loads up preordered dinners for about fifty Kensington families. He delivers a few of them around Kensington, but most are picked up at his house on Kensington Road, just above the church. “All these cars come in and out, and within twenty minutes it’s done,” he said. “The whole pickup takes only about an hour.”

The effort, which benefits local restaurants with about a thousand-dollar drop, started a few months ago. “It was kind of a brainstorm with the kids,” Shiu said. Shiu and his wife Margaret have two children, eleven-year-old Cole and nine-year-old Audrey. “The kids love eating out and exploring different restaurants.”

After March, when it started to dawn on them that we couldn’t go to restaurants, there was a sense of loss. They wanted to know if we could do anything to help the restaurants.”

Shiu turned this into a teaching moment, talking about the pandemic’s effect on struggling eateries. “We discussed how restaurants were handcuffed by the shortage of exposure to possible customers, how they couldn’t attract passersby. And how they couldn’t figure supply. If someone ordered ahead, it’s very different than people saying fill my order now.”

The kids suggested growing the family’s order to make a larger impact. What if we order for our next-door neighbors? “And then the conversations turned into, well, let’s see if we can invite more people,” Shiu said. The first restaurant chosen was Noodles Fresh, “because the owner’s son is in the same class as my son,” Shiu explained. “The owner gave me great advice about how we could both make this fun for the community and useful for the restaurants. Some restaurants don’t have the staffing to fill such a large order, but some are really excited about it.”

Shiu said that he’s gotten the kids to blog about their experiences with Kensington Eats. “It counts as a journal entry for school,” he said. “And food is great to write about. They’re limited because they’re stuck at home. But they’ve found a cadence and a rhythm much more than my wife and I have. We haven’t seen our clients in nine months.”



Shiu is Elfster’s GM, which he noted is in a very different position than restaurants. Elfster is a Secret Santa app, helping an organizer choose an amount for his or her group to spend on gifts and then match recipients with givers. One can even make certain that the same pair is not matched next gift-giving time. “This year we’ve seen phenomenal growth because people have to shop online and can’t see people for the holidays,” he said. “I’m fortunate to be in a segment of the business world that is thriving.”

Kensington Eats chooses restaurants by recommendations. “I’d love to keep it close to the community,” Shiu said. “I’d love to do something with Kensington Inn, but they’re not ready yet—they don’t have the staffing.”

Kensington Eats stipulates that the restaurant must provide a meal for a family of four for \$60. The meal has to be packaged and transport well in the trunk of Shiu’s car. “I love French fries but French fries cannot travel. Another part is can the restaurant work with me. Some restaurants are too rigid to work with our group.”

Those who sign up on the website (www.kensingtoneats.com) get a link to the menu from the chosen restaurant. “From there you can decide yes this week or not this week. You choose the meat or a vegetarian option. And it ends up being quite a lot of food.” Shiu tries to find restaurants that might have particular difficulty attracting customers: “For example, Luca Cucina Italiana on San Pablo has little seating and it’s hard to get takeout there because there’s very little parking. We did a sample of Luca Cucina Italiana with our family last night. The kids love this. They start talking like food critics. It’s been a great family experience.”

Over Halloween, Shiu discovered how important Kensington Eats is to the restaurants—and to his neighbors. “People kept telling me, ‘Hey, listen, Kensington Eats is the highlight of our week.’ I didn’t realize it was making that much of an impact on people.”



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