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DECEMBER 2023/JANUARY 2024

A PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 10

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(Left) The Breaux family, jetting in from a galaxy far, far away, was the big vote-getter in the Family Costume category. (Right) It takes a village to move a pumpkin. Photos by Karen Yencich.



Costumes Threaten to Upstage the Massive Pumpkin

By Karen Yencich

A little before 9am on October 29, the morning of the Colusa Circle Halloween Harvest Festival, the Giant Pumpkin signaled the ceremonial opening to this year's Market festivities, when it was levered into place by farmers' market manager Chris Hall, together with Harry Pabla and Harpreet Saini and their crew from Colusa Market.

It was the second year that Colusa Market sponsored the centerpiece attraction, and within moments of its arrival, the enormous pumpkin was drawing shoppers and small children into its gravitational field. The first few free pumpkins for the little kids had just been handed out, the annual Market Hay Bale Corral with its

scarecrow was beginning to fill up, and the leading edge of an eventual avalanche of families and small children headed for the 15th annual costume parade was just beginning to gather. A day-long party was underway.

At the end of what turned out to be the biggest Halloween Harvest Festival ever, the Kensington Farmers' Market collected hundreds of entries to "Guess the Weight of the Giant Pumpkin." One youngster, responding to her mother's prompt to hazard a guess, responded, "Seven daddies." That would have been correct if the daddy in question weighed 135 pounds, but he looked heavier than that. No one landed on the actual 945-pound weight, but the two winners came close: Mari Sharon-Lai (five years old)

See Colusa Halloween, page 11

Magic, Music, Movies, Mixology at the Kensington Library

By Jenny Rockwell

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

DECEMBER PROGRAMS

Tues, Dec 5, 6:30pm Unsung Women of Music Musician and historian Mark Montgomery French will introduce you to exciting tunes, and dive deep into the talent and tales of unfairly obscured women in music, featuring Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Carol Kaye, Wendy Carlos, Maria Schneider, Ethel Gabriel, Sylvia Robinson, and more!

Tues, Dec 12, 6:30pm Captain Jack Spareri Come be part of Jack Spareri's crew as he does amazing magic, ventriloquism with Maynard the talking monkey, and tells the world's worst pirate jokes!

Fridays, Dec 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, Baby and Toddler Storytime Fun stories, songs, action rhymes, and more! Great for increasing early literacy skills and making friends. Two identical sessions. 10am & 11am.

Tues, Dec 5, 6:30pm, Castoff's Knitting Club 1st Tuesday of each month. Open to all levels of knitters. We share ideas, tips, and favorite resources and patterns. Bring your own yarn!

Tuesdays, Dec 5, 19 Family Storytime Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome. 6:30pm.

Monday, Dec 18, 6:30-8pm Kensington Library Book Club The club meets online via Zoom, usually on the fourth Monday of each month. The selection for December is *The Moon and Sixpence* by W. Somerset Maugham.

Monday, Dec 25 & Tues, Dec 26 closed for observance of Christmas and Christmas eve.

JANUARY PROGRAMS

Tues, Jan 9, 6:30pm Cinema Round Table Kensington Library's Cinema Round Table meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30pm. January's film is: *M* (1931), by Fritz Lang, which merges trenchant social commentary with chilling suspense, creating a panorama of private madness and public hysteria that to this day remains the blueprint for the psychological thriller. See the film at www.kanopy.com/en/ccclib/video/112965

Tuesday, Jan 16, 6:30pm Mocktail Mixology Learn how to mix up delicious cocktails without the booze. Your mixologist and holistic nutritionist host, Lila Volkas, will demonstrate different ways to transform non-alcoholic ingredients into simple and complex drinks.

Fridays, Jan 5, 12, 19, 26, Baby and Toddler Storytime Fun stories, songs, action rhymes, and more! Great for increasing early literacy skills and making friends. Two identical sessions. 10am & 11am.

Tues, Jan 9, 6:30pm, Castoff's Knitting Club Meets this month on the 2nd Tuesday. (Usually meets the 1st Tuesday of each month). Open to all levels of knitters. Bring your own yarn!

Tuesdays, Jan 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Family Storytime Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome. 6:30pm.

Monday, Jan 22, 6:30-8pm Kensington Library Book Club The club meets online via Zoom, usually on the fourth Monday of each month. The selection for January is: *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* by John Le Carré.

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CITIZEN FORUM

Restoring Kensington's Community

By Karen Shebek

I had lunch at the Kensington Community Council (KCC) annual picnic, which had been disrupted by unexpected rain, leading Ms. Carrico to cancel the performance of Korematsu Middle School's jazz band. The Great Space Coasters band performed under the awning of the renovated Community Center. Looking at the volunteers serving selections prepared by chatting grill masters, I noticed that Kensington hasn't had the changing of the guard it will need to be the vital, thriving community it was when I moved here in the 1990s.

There is a perception that back then the community must have been fueled by mostly stay-at-home parents. Not so. Most of the decades-long friendships I formed with fellow volunteers were with folks who juggled jobs,

work commutes, frantic rides to sports practices, tasks at home. We fit in small bits of time to handle tasks that helped make community events special. Those connections forged over a hot barbecue, or setting up tables really can endure. Recently, I shouldn't have been surprised that within minutes of realizing I needed a yard tool, just a few texts to some "volunteer buddies" yielded multiple options, as well as a physical offer to pitch in for the task itself, which I accepted. Kind acts of the past, where we joked and socialized, echo as kindness stored in a pantry- ready to come out when needed.

COVID made us more attached to our screens, work and personal. Community interactions risked the health of vulnerable family and friends. Well, it is time to pivot. Get a friend to join you in exploring how you can help. Write to KCC and offer to be on "reserve" for help when needed. Can you cook, serve, pick up supplies, distribute fliers, help with scholarships for camp? Ask KCC to let you know how you can help.

Thinking KCC might not be your style? Celebrate your love of reading and the treasures available to all at our library by seeing how you could help the Friends of the Kensington Library. Why do a workout at home when you could do some heavy lifting for that volunteer group?

Care to invest your time in the beacon that is our local elementary school? The Kensington Education Foundation could likely use volunteers for its community-building fundraiser that has supported enrichment programs for our students' souls since the 1980s. Carve out your own personal path to test the waters by offering to be one of the many hands that pulls off the historic Garden Party.

Speaking of paths...part of Kensington's charm lies in our quirky paths that zig and zig down our hill. The Kensington Improvement Club takes on projects like path cleanups, where a few more hands would reduce the risk of injury to the many active seniors who do their best. Are you the type of person who treasures the physical attributes of our community? Spend some time maintaining them for generations to come.

Grab your phone and send an email—"I'd like to pitch in"—describing your area of interest and type of tasks you are open to whichever group might be a good fit for you: info@kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org, president@kensingtoneducationfoundation.org, kensington.FKL@gmail.com or kicpost@gmail.com.

Small actions help. Faces will be more and more familiar. Small town life can nurture its citizens; even a town's soul needs to be restored from time to time. It's your time now.



Messiah Sing-Along Always Popular Event

By Charis Domador

A large crowd fills the sanctuary of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley (UUCB) every December for a participatory performance of Handel's masterpiece oratorio Messiah, featuring the Hallelujah chorus. There is an orchestra, choir and soloists, and the audience is invited to sing along with the choruses. This year it will be earlier than usual, on Sunday, December 10, at 4 pm.

Another annual event at UUCB is the Holiday Fair, which for the first time will take place on the same day as the Sing-Along Messiah. It is a sale of holiday decorations, gift wrap, crafts, recycled "giftables," jewelry, food gifts and plants. It opens at 10 am, so go early for the best selection, but will extend through the Messiah intermission for a unique holiday shopping experience.

Both events help support the operating budget of the church. You can learn more about UUCB at uucb.org. UUCB will, of course, also have its popular Christmas Eve services with candle-lighting, starting at 5pm and 10pm on December 24.

Wildfire's Impacts Top the Agenda at KIC Town Hall

By Sylvia Elsbury

California's brewing crisis in property insurance was the hot topic at the Town Hall meeting hosted by the Kensington Improvement Club (KIC) on October 21 in the Community Center. All seats were taken by the estimated 60 to 70 in attendance, with a small overflow crowd listening in from outside the wall of glass doors, opened wide to the lawn.

First on the agenda of speakers was Julia Juarez, deputy commissioner in the office of Ricardo Lara, California's insurance commissioner. Juarez was there to talk about the consequences of wildfire risk on property insurance cost and availability. She said Lara's team has held 1,800 "listening sessions" throughout California, engaging the public about "what's happening, what the state is doing, and what residents can do."

California is the second largest market in the world for insurers, Juarez noted, and insurers have not left the state. They have, however, begun pausing new policies while studying how to proceed in the face of critical wildfire risk. Insurers' profits in California have been underwater for the past ten years because our loss ratio is far higher than the national average, Juarez said, noting that "five straight years of massive wildfires wiped out insurance companies' reserves." She added that Proposition 103 has constrained the insurance business in California, complicating and slowing the process of raising rates. Also, a mere twelve companies hold 85 percent of California's insurance policies, so the risk is "compact," as Juarez put it, not spread evenly among the 115 companies doing business here. State Farm writes 21 percent of policies alone.

Commissioner Lara "is trying to keep insurers in the state," said Juarez, adding that "rate hikes are not enough to make this happen." California's FAIR plan is one of Lara's tools. Created by the governor and legislature but not funded by tax dollars, the FAIR plan is controlled by insurance companies and is the insurer of last resort. A FAIR plan costs more for less coverage, Juarez said, than policies purchased directly from insurers, but the maximum FAIR coverage recently rose to \$3 million from the previous high of \$1.5 million, to better align with property values in the state.

FAIR is now the only insurance plan offered in some communities, and to expand options for homeowners, Commissioner Lara is mandating that 85 percent of new policies offered in California be written where risk is highest. In tandem, the state is mandating fire risk mitigation in these places. "Safer from Wildfires," created by Lara's office together with Governor Newsom's, describes specific things homeowners can do. A summary can be downloaded from the website of the California Department of Insurance. Compliance earns a state-mandated discount for participating homes.

Juarez also described changes involving the wildfire risk score assigned to every property in California. Formerly concealed from consumers by insurance underwriters, the wildfire risk score is now public information, and it can be appealed. The Insurance Commissioner's office helps mediate between consumers and insurers; Juarez said a Napa homeowner recently won a reduction of \$1,000 from his policy premium, through mediation. Changes are also underway in the re-insurance business, where Commission Lara is advocating for consumers, rewriting regulations and tightening judicial review deadlines to expedite improvements.

In addition to securing existing homes, "easing of insurance pressure is critical to building new housing," Juarez pointed out. She concluded, "There will be relief, but it's going to take awhile."

Wildfire risk remained top of mind as the KIC Town Hall continued with a presentation by Michelle Rinehart, Coordinator of Wildfire Mitigation and Grants for ConFire, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. Rinehart's position is funded by Measure X, a sales tax approved by voters in 2020. Battalion and Training Chief Jose Castrejon, of the El Cerrito and Kensington Fire Departments introduced Rinehart.

Community engagement and grant writing are Rinehart's chief responsibilities. She described the process by which ConFire grants may be requested, noting that private property owners are eligible to receive funds. Grants may also be awarded for hazard mitigation in "common ground" areas such as district land or county-owned land within Kensington. Rinehart discussed Firewise USA, a national program with two main components: collaboration between neighbors and code enforcement by local authorities. Using the Firewise framework, groups of neighbors or whole communities can organize and take steps to reduce wildfire risk. Some projects are well underway, such as the wood-chipping program in which 150 Kensington homes participate, reported Rinehart.

The first step to access ConFire grants or initiate Firewise projects is to enlist Rinehart's assistance with the application process by emailing info@cccfd.org.

KIC's Town Hall continued with Sylvia Elsbury's report on the Kensington Community Council (KCC); KCC's fundraising appeal is on the front page of the November Outlook. Next up, Lloyd Cowell of the Kensington Municipal Advisory Council (KMAC) provided an overview of KMAC's mission. KMAC is a board of resident volunteers, appointed by Supervisor John Gioia, to advise property owners on land use matters. "Residential development is good for the community," said Cowell, KMAC's current board chair, adding that KMAC has never recommended against a project during his tenure. KMAC may mediate between property owners in disputes over Kensington's zoning ordinances that govern views, distance between homes, and ADU construction. But KMAC is only advisory, and doesn't dictate what ultimately happens on a project. "That's the county," said Cowell.

Also on KIC's agenda was Jim Fisher, President of the Friends of Kensington Library (FKL). In a recent conversation, Fisher mentioned the need for new volunteers to join FKL, which raises funds for library programs through twice-yearly book sales, and could use help with the (quite literal) heavy lifting involved in those popular sales. At the KIC Town Hall he noted that in addition to reaching its fundraising goals, FKL is dedicated to recirculating reading material. This makes FKL one of the oldest sustainability projects around! Volunteers and book donors can reach FKL at kensington.fkl@gmail.com.

KIC's final speaker was Supervisor John Gioia, who started with Measure X, which funds wildfire mitigation, library improvements and the creation of a mental health crisis line. He also reported that Contra Costa County will soon update its general plan for the first time in 30 years, and that a town hall meeting will be held in Kensington for input, when the new plan has been drafted.

Gioia touched briefly on two of his working groups: Kensington Paths, seeking to assign ownership of the public paths crisscrossing our community, and the Tree Ordinance working group ("you're entitled to the view you bought"). He also invited residents with public works requests, such as adding stop signs at an intersection, to start by

contacting his office.

Few questions were put to Supervisor Gioia, as time ran short. "Will power lines be undergrounded?" No, said Gioia. PG&E is behind on its own plans, statewide, and has no undergrounding plan for Kensington. Another questioner asked Gioia's opinion on "consolidation," a term much discussed in Kensington lately. "Consolidation" is shorthand for the push, by some local elected officials and residents, to eliminate the Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) and shift fire protection and emergency medical response to the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPCSD). "Gathering more information is the place to start," said Gioia, and recommended turning to the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) as a resource.

New Book Details an Unspeakable Tragedy

By Linnea Due

Cultural anthropologist and researcher Griffin Dix, a longtime Kensington resident, just published a book long in the making. *Who Killed Kenzo?* is not an anthropological text but a memoir focusing on the aftermath of the singular nightmare of Dix's life: the day in 1994 that his son Kenzo was killed in an accidental shooting. Kenzo's friend Mark brought his father Clifford's Beretta to show Kenzo; before bringing the handgun to his room, Mark carefully replaced the loaded clip with an empty clip so the Beretta would be "safe" for the fourteen-year-olds to handle. What Mark hadn't remembered or perhaps known is that a bullet could still be in the chamber. This particular model's indicator that the gun was loaded is almost unnoticeable and the company's safety manual barely gives it a mention.

In an interview in October, Dix said, "At first we thought the cause of Kenzo's death was the mistakes of the father and mistakes made by his son, bringing it back to the room where Kenzo was. But then we began to realize there was a lot more behind it than just those mistakes. We learned that firearms are exempt from product safety regulation, and that there are loopholes in our gun laws." The tragedy that upended the Dix family is all too familiar—firearms remain the leading cause of death of American children under age 20, outstripping even auto accidents.

The grieving family—Dix, his wife Lynn, and eldest son Kalani—ended up suing Beretta. This section of the book reads like a legal thriller: using court documents and his own notes, Dix records the judge's behind-the-scenes decisions, the jury selection, and testimony by Dix's side and Beretta's legal team. Dix was disappointed that the judge wanted the jury to assign proportional blame; he was afraid that the jury would focus on Mark and his father rather than realizing that had the handgun had a visible chamber-loaded indicator, Kenzo would still be alive. During the trial something became clear to Dix: "It seemed for them any suggestion that a gun might be dangerous—like having a chamber-loaded indicator—would cause a consumer to worry that this [gun] might be unsafe for me in my home, so it could be a disincentive to buy."

Dix lost that trial, in which he hoped to force Beretta to adopt a trigger lock and a visible chamber-loaded indicator. Two more appeals followed. In between and after, Dix met more victims of gun violence, more grief-stricken families, and became active in gun safety legislation. The tidal waves of sorrow and guilt engulfed friends and family alike for decades after: Dix and his wife eventually divorced, Kenzo's older brother had to deal with the loss of his brother, Mark and Clifford suffered agonies. Dix would go to Kenzo's graveside at Sunset Memorial Cemetery to find fresh notes and tokens from his classmates and friends years after the event.

"I joined this coalition," Dix said, "the California Firearms Strategy Group." The group of victims, activists, politicians and lawyers has been remarkably successful in passing gun safety regulations, and the results are vastly improved statistics in the state. "Gun deaths declined by over half," Dix said. "Two particular laws required safety standards for handguns sold in California, and that brought gun deaths down by two-thirds. Best of all, those safer guns are now sold in the rest of the country."

Needless to say, the firearms industry does not come out well in this telling. "The gun laws save a lot of lives," Dix said. "But my story about making handguns safer is only a small part of the problem. The firearms industry sells guns for protection, but they're not really a good means of protection. When you have a gun in the house, the risk of homicide doubles and the risk of suicide triples."

Dix said that despite industry advertising, guns are very seldom used for self-defense, perhaps as little as one percent. "The advertisements say that you should store a gun locked but guns that are used for protection need to be immediately accessible. And they can be stored loaded. They send very mixed messages. It's very dangerous."

The gun industry has prevented the Centers for Disease Control to conduct firearms research despite the high rate of accidental deaths. The industry is exempt from federal safety oversight, and it alone has protection from civil lawsuits. It funds campaigns to prevent cities and states from passing stricter regulations, and of course it donates millions to politicians committed to keeping those special protections in place. "But in California," Dix said, "we've made it possible to sue gun makers and dealers who are responsible for the deaths of someone."

The Beretta model was made for military and police use, but was not restricted to civilians. "Another popular gun is the Sig Sauer P320," Dix said. "More than a hundred people allege that the pistol discharges when they have not pulled the trigger. Guns are just not regulated for consumer safety."

A fascinating theme that runs through the book is the conflation of gun safety and gun "control." "People think of the whole issue as pro-gun vs. anti-gun," Dix said. "I don't like that dichotomy. I don't consider myself anti-gun. I'm not for banning all ownership of guns. We try to keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of dangerous people. You can tell which guns are especially dangerous and which people are especially dangerous by their actions. We have laws that restrict ownership and sales when they go through background checks."

Dix has been active since his son's death in Brady chapters, in the coalition, and in other avenues to advocate for safer firearms. His book is eye-opening and contains an after-verdict jury debriefing following one appeal in which the gun industry lawyers probe for weak spots in their defense. Why? To strengthen those weak areas in the next case of an accidental tragedy that could have been prevented.



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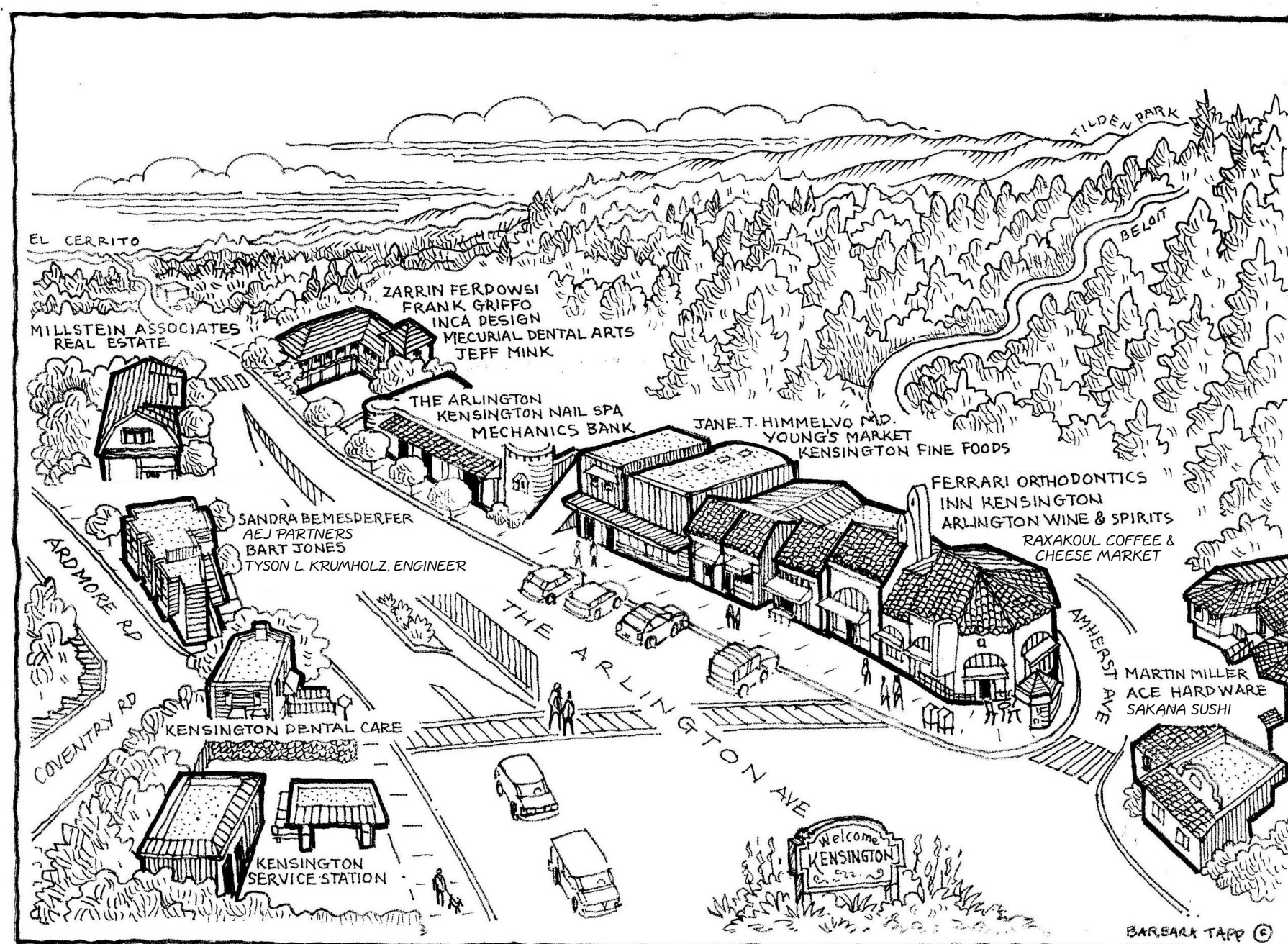
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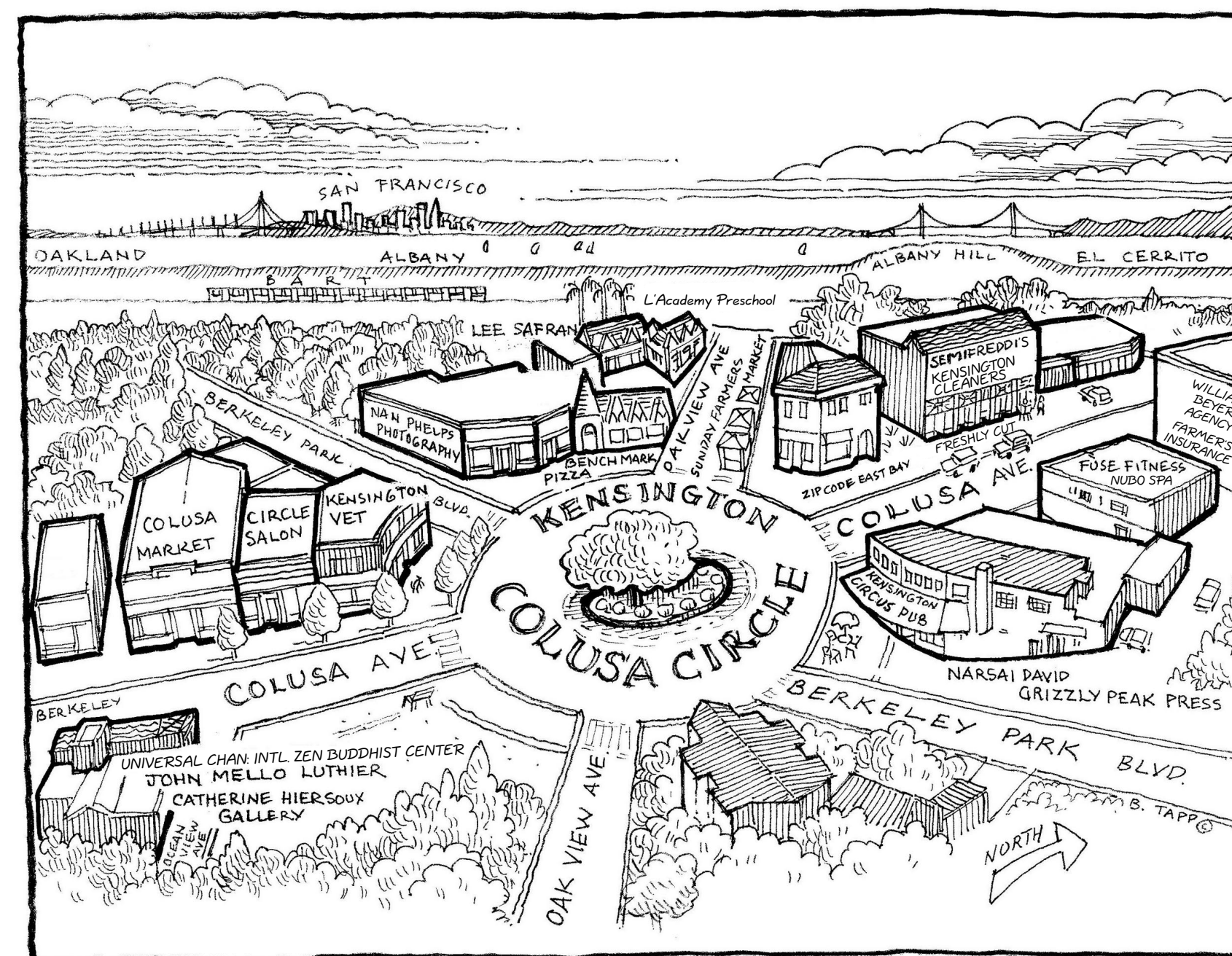
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Many of your favorite KASEP classes will return after the winter break including Carpentry, Gymnastics, Muffin Madness, Chocolate Creations, Cooking Around the World, Tennis & Sewing. You can find a full brochure of our class available on our website the first week of December.

Registration for our winter session opens on December 5th at 7:00 pm for kindergarten and 7:30 pm for grades 1-6. Don't miss out – secure your spot for a winter session with learning, laughter, and limitless possibilities. Winter session begins the week of January 2nd, 2024.



Adult and Family Classes

Mediterranean Cooking

When: Every Tuesday evening in the Community Center
Time: 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.
Location: Kensington Community Center, 59 Arlington Ave, Kensington
Price: \$45 per class, which includes all materials needed for the class.
Flexible Attendance: Join us each week for a comprehensive culinary journey or drop in when your schedule permits
Dec 5th Israeli Cuisine Part 2
Dec 12th Mediterranean Inspired Party Cuisine
Dec 19th-Dec 26th No Class
Jan 2nd Moroccan Cuisine Part 1
Jan 9th Moroccan Cuisine Part 2
Jan 16th Spain featuring Andalusian Cuisine
Jan 23rd Spain featuring Valencia Cuisine
Jan 30th Turkish Cuisine Part 1

Jewelry Making Class

January 12th 6-8pm at the Recreation Building Cost \$35

*New Class

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Register at [KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/adult-and-family-classes](https://www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org/adult-and-family-classes)

Keep checking our website for updated adult class schedules.

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October Patrol Log

- On October 1, at 1421 hours, officers responded to the Golden Gate Mausoleum at 101 Colusa Avenue and took a report of vandalism. The damage was approximately \$700. The investigation is ongoing.
- On October 2, at 1101 hours, officers were dispatched to the 200 block of Coventry Road for a theft from a vehicle. The loss was estimated to be approximately \$700.
- On October 3, at 0507 hours, officers conducted a traffic enforcement stop for a vehicle with expired registration. The vehicle was impounded and during the inventory search, narcotics were located. The case was forwarded to the District Attorney's Office.
- On October 5, at 0712 hours, officers attempted to stop a vehicle at Moeser Lane and King Drive. The vehicle failed to yield and drove recklessly through city streets. Officers did not pursue the suspect due to the risks. El Cerrito Flock cameras captured video of the suspect's car allowing for follow-up investigation.
- On October 6, at 1927 hours, officers responded to a non-injury collision on Arlington Avenue at Oberlin Avenue.
- On October 7, at 1255 hours, officers responded to the one hundred block of Cowper Avenue for a report of a stolen vehicle. On October 9, the vehicle was located by Oakland PD and returned to the victim.
- On October 10, at 0744 hours, officers responded to the three hundred block of Berkeley Park Boulevard for a report of a stolen vehicle.
- On October 11, at 1150 hours, officers responded to an abandoned stolen vehicle in the one hundred block of Cowper Avenue. The vehicle was returned to its owner.
- On October 14, at 0925 hours, officers responded to the two hundred block of Lake Drive for an attempted vehicle theft.
- On October 17, at 2349 hours, officers took a report of a stolen vehicle from the one hundred block of Highland Boulevard. On October 20, at 0053 hours, the vehicle was found in a neighboring jurisdiction, and the occupants were arrested. The case was forwarded to the Contra Costa County DA Office for prosecution.
- On October 18, at 1507 hours, officers responded to Kensington Community Park for a report of vandalism to the restrooms.
- On October 20, at 1613 hours, officers stopped a vehicle in the four hundred block of Colusa Avenue for vehicle code violations. The driver was identified as a wanted person and arrested for outstanding warrants.
- On October 21, at 0111 hours, officers were dispatched to a solo motorcycle traffic collision, the driver was identified and later arrested for suspicion of DUI. The case has been submitted to the Contra Costa County DA Office for prosecution.
- On October 23, at 0911 hours, officers in the one hundred block of Eureka Avenue saw a known offender of a restraining order. The suspect was contacted and confirmed to be in violation of a court order. The person was arrested, and the case was sent to the Contra Costa County DA Office for prosecution.
- On October 25, at 1554 hours, officers at Arlington Avenue and Sunset Drive contacted an extremely intoxicated individual. He was detained and an ambulance was called to assist. Officers wrote an investigation that was sent to the DA for prosecution.
- On October 26, at 0839 hours, officers were dispatched to the 100 block of Arlington Avenue for a non-injury collision.

The Outlook staff wishes everyone a happy holiday and a great start to 2024. Look for us in February!

May your holidays be filled with peace and love



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Advent & Christmas at Arlington Community Church
How does a weary world rejoice?

Dec. 3, 10, 17 - Advent Services, Sundays, 10am

How does a weary world rejoice? Join us as we venture to answer this question, seeking hope, peace, joy and love, even as we acknowledge our weariness. Each service will be followed by a joy-filled social hour with refreshments, festive activities and live music. Check our website for more information about our special activities each Sunday.

Dec. 3 - Moonlight Labyrinth, Sunday, 6pm

A meditative outdoor labyrinth experience to bring in the Advent season, accompanied by candlelight, followed by cookies and refreshments.

Dec. 12 - A Service for the Weary, Tuesday, 7pm

For those who are grieving or simply weary this holiday season. In this *Blue Christmas* service we will hold space for those who are not feeling merry and bright, offering music and meditations toward comfort and peace.

Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, Sunday, 5pm

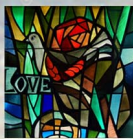
A joyful and interactive service for all ages with beautiful music and plenty of singing, ending with candlelight, Silent Night, and Joy to the World!
How does a weary world rejoice? We make room.

Dec. 31 - New Year's Eve Contemplative Service, Sunday, 10am

A contemplative service for reflection as we transition from one year to the next.

Jan. 7 - Epiphany Breakfast, Sunday, 10am

A festive brunch in our social hall to celebrate Epiphany. Enjoy food and fellowship along with singing, discussion, and a short meditation on how we can renew our strength as we begin a new year.



Arlington Community Church, UCC
52 ARLINGTON AVENUE, KENSINGTON, CA. 94707
arlingtoncommunitychurchucc.org





KENSINGTON K-9s

Adopting Benji a Win-Win

By Winston Churchill, Bulldog

I met Benji while playing at Kensington Park one day. I first noticed his high energy, outgoing puppy brother, Tokyo, and his parents, and then I noticed the small senior dog quietly exploring the park beside them. Hello, Benji!

Amidst the dogs running, barking, fetching, and wrestling in the lawn at sunset, Benji stood out because of his sense of calm. His little seven-pound senior body was curved, his steps were slow and a bit unsteady, but he radiated contentment and peace.

Two years ago, Benji was adopted at fifteen years of age. He was picked up as a stray and taken to the animal shelter. Because most people aren't looking to adopt a senior, Benji's time ran out and he was placed on the euthanasia list. But fortunately for this golden oldie, he was saved by Muttville Senior Dog Rescue.

Benji's parents, Matt and Benny, first learned about Muttville through a coworker who adopted a sweet senior. They became involved with the rescue organization and fostered five dogs, nurturing them and getting them ready for their forever families.

And when they fostered Benji, they knew he was extra special. He was super happy, cute, and immediately made himself comfortable in his new home in the hills. Despite his senior dog health problems, including arthritis, pancreatitis, liver issues, dental disease, cataracts, and deafness, they immediately fell in love. Just a day after taking him home to foster, they submitted the adoption paperwork.

Benji's dad, Matt, said that adopting a senior has many benefits. An older dog knows the ropes and won't need house training. He's already well socialized, calm, and won't chew the furniture or your shoes. Benji is a lovely old soul, very independent, curious and fearless. He spends his days happily sniffing, exploring, or snoozing. He is much easier to care for than their two-year-old dog, Tokyo.

And with a senior, each day is precious. It reminds you not to take tomorrow for granted. Now at 17 years of age, every day with Benji is a family celebration.



In October KASEP teachers, past and present, hosted a crafts fair at Arlington Community Church. April Schlanger stands behind a table crowded with goodies such as handmade jewelry, fused glass creations, and homemade jams and jellies. There was face-painting, hands-on kids' crafts, and a Boba Tea stand hosted by Raxakoul Coffee. A portion of proceeds were donated to KCC for KASEP scholarships and to KPCCSD for park improvements. Photo by Esther Hill.

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GMRS neighborhood net: Sally Fraser takes an incoming neighbor's report with Valerie Meyers and Virginie Tejoro scribbling. Not pictured are Eileen Nottoli and Adrienne Ambrose.

Kensington's Area 6 Trains for Emergencies

By Jim Marks

On October 14, residents of Kensington CERT Area 6 (below the Arlington) got together at Kensington Park to test radio communication with an eye to getting help and relaying information during an emergency. Effective communication during emergencies is critical for ensuring public safety and coordinating disaster response efforts. It should be anticipated that during disasters such as a major earthquake or wildfire, communication systems such as cell phones, landlines and the Internet are likely to be out for prolonged periods of time.

Family Radio Service (FRS), General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS), and Amateur Radio, commonly known as Ham radio, play invaluable roles in emergency communications due to their distinct advantages and capabilities. FRS and GMRS are easy-to-use walkie-talkie radio services accessible to the general public. FRS radios typically offer a range of one to two miles, making them suitable for short-range, localized communication. GMRS radios can provide higher power levels and longer communication ranges. Both FRS and GMRS radios are commonly used for family outings, outdoor activities, and community events, but their low cost and accessibility make them valuable for emergency situations as well. During an emergency they are particularly useful for communication within and between blocks to provide situational awareness, ask for and receive help and to escalate issues through ham operators to first responders.

Ham radio is a globally recognized and regulated service that requires operators to obtain licenses. Hams enjoy a wide range of frequencies and equipment, enabling long-range communication. During emergencies, Ham operators often become a lifeline for affected communities, providing backup communication when other systems fail. They can establish emergency communications with first responders, reach an Internet provider outside of our area to send messages, relay critical information, and coordinate emergency response efforts.

The combination of FRS, GMRS, and Ham radio provides a diverse and comprehensive emergency communication infrastructure. In Kensington CERT Area 6, we have established a network of neighbors prepared to use FRS/GMRS radios during a disaster for communications. This network gets together every first and third Monday on FRS channel 6 to practice emergency communications. Similarly, we have three licensed Ham radio operators in the area who are members of the Kensington-El Cerrito (KARO-ECHO2) radio club.

On Saturday, October 14, members of KARO-ECHO and our local neighborhood FRS/GMRS net conducted a simulated emergency test. The neighborhood net fielded incoming FRS and GMRS damage assessment reports and calls for assistance. Requests and situations that could not be handled in the neighborhood were given to the Ham operators to forward to first responders at the El Cerrito Emergency Operations Center. Members of our community were able to practice and hone our skills and identify opportunities for improvement. We would like to thank our K6 volunteers and neighborhood teenagers whose participation was key to the success of our training day. We would especially like to thank Hal Graboske, a longtime Kensington resident and Ham, for his vision in establishing this net.

Our ability to respond effectively to an emergency in Kensington will benefit from broader adoption of radios and radio skills. If you are interested in learning more and getting on the air, contact Ednalee Warnecke (ednalee@warnecke@gmail.com) or Jim Marks (marksjd54@gmail.com) or join us on FRS/GMRS channel 6 any first or third Monday at 7pm.



KARO-ECHO Ham radio operators: Ednalee Warnecke (with Jim Marks) sends an emergency report to the Emergency Operations Center.



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

Church of Berkeley

December 10
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Holiday Fair
4:00 p.m.
Sing-Along Messiah

December 21@ 6:00 p.m.
Winter Solstice Service

December 24
5:00 p.m.
Intergenerational
Christmas Eve Service
10:00 p.m.
Traditional Candlelight
Christmas Eve Service

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in person and online.

Check our website for details and
more ways to connect:
www.uucb.org

Halloween
...from Front Page

and Melissa Cerkin (a certified adult).

The parade last year drew around 130 participants, and estimates doubled that number for this year's event. The Kensington police held back traffic while T-Rex led a herd of princesses, astronauts, firefighters, prehistoric creatures, food items, robots, trains, and assorted animals, vegetables and minerals twice around Colusa Circle.

While the parade was underway, volunteers counted "people's choice" votes for favorite costumes. At the bandstand after the parade, all participants were awarded, by acclamation, an "A" for effort, and the favorites were announced. The Star Wars (Breux) Family (from a galaxy far, far away) gathered the most votes for family costume, although Bacon (dad)/Lettuce(mom)/Tomato (baby) and the Oz family made a good showing. The big vote-getters from a mob of exceptional individual efforts were: Yellow Highlighter (when she doffed her cap, there was a huge felt tip underneath), Kitchen Sink (it took a lot of tin foil to make that happen), R2/D2, Baby Bird and Day of the Dead. Some of the winners slipped away before their prizes were claimed, so if you're the Kitchen Sink, Baby Bird or Day of the Dead, please stop by the Cookbook Table at the market to claim your prize.

With a closing fanfare from the band, the Elmwoods, who joined in with drum rolls and salutes for the costume awards, T-Rex led crowd of children over to the Fuse Fitness Garage to join the throng where the Animal Show was just beginning.

At the end of the day, participants returned to their home galaxies, the skeleton returned to his closet, and the hay bales were hauled off. While the market crew swept up, the Giant Pumpkin returned to a place of honor at Colusa Market where it held court, posing for selfies and granting wishes.



Photos by Nan Phelps Photography and the Photo Booth

Boo-tiful Moments and Spook-tacular Fun

By Erika Ramirez

The Colusa Circle Halloween Harvest Celebration exceeded all expectations this year! We were thrilled by the incredible turnout, with over 250 kids participating in the bewitching scavenger hunt. It was a treat to watch as they searched high and low, with excitement and laughter that filled the entire event. Kids of all ages enjoyed the free ice cream prize from Benchmark Pizzeria, a perfect reward after a successful scavenger hunt.

To capture the spooktacular moments of the day, Colusa Circle Merchants Association introduced a free photo booth in the parklet between Zip Code East Bay and Benchmark Portavia, which was an absolute hit! Families and friends eagerly lined up to showcase their costumes, strike silly poses, and create lasting memories to take home.

The Fuse Fitness Garage was a hub of activity, with the kid-friendly obstacle course and the beloved Tracy the Animal Guy show. Hosting the animal show at the Fuse Fitness Garage proved to be a fantastic location for the larger crowd. His show delighted the children and adults as he introduced them to a variety of fascinating creatures.

We were touched to witness the community come together and embrace the spirit of the Halloween celebration. We want to extend our thanks to everyone who came and participated, and we can't wait to see you all again next year!

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Handmade Gifts at St. Jerome's Christmas Sale Dec. 2-3

By Mary D. Ghidella

The crafters of Saint Jerome Church, located at 308 Carmel Avenue, El Cerrito, meet weekly to make hand-knit and other home-sewn items for the annual Christmas sale December 2, 3-6:30pm and December 3, 9am to 1pm. The hand-knit items range from sweaters and blankets for baby, scarves and fingerless gloves, hats and shawls for adults, and colorful Christmas ornaments. Other holiday items and hand-crafted gifts are also offered.



KENSINGTON EATS OUT

Encouraging Teens to Give Back

By Ittai and Cole Shiu

Our initial mission was to support the restaurant industry hit during the pandemic by crowd-sourcing large meal orders and providing support through marketing and logistics. During this time what inspired us most was seeing how our Kensington residents rallied to engage with us as we supported local businesses.

If you are a regular reader of this column, you can expect us to champion and promote local restaurants. However, this holiday season is the perfect time to revisit the community service aspect of our mission.

Did you know that Kensington is situated in a county where one in four people experience hunger or food insecurity? Many individuals rely on the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano for emergency and supplemental food to residents of Solano and Contra Costa counties. Founded as a nonprofit organization in 1975, this organization is dedicated to addressing the basic needs of our neighbors as a member of Feeding America, the largest domestic hunger-relief organization in the nation.

Like any nonprofit, volunteers are crucial, and given the Kensington Eats commitment to our neighbors, we decided to roll up our sleeves and join in. My son Cole and I participated in a weekend food-sorting session where we sorted and packaged over 700 pounds of fruits and vegetables in just two hours. These provisions would go on to be distributed to hungry families later that weekend.



"It was hard work but incredibly rewarding," remarked Cole, "and when you see the amount of perishable food to be distributed, it becomes obvious how much more work needs to be done."

Cultivating a habit of giving back can start at a young age. Krystine Dinh, Director of Marketing for the Food Bank, commented that "teen volunteerism is crucial to our mission, as they help inspire their peers and friends to give back to their communities. Teens like Cole can inspire a whole generation! We'd love to brainstorm ways to increase their level of participation and



engagement in their teenage years and beyond."

Volunteers served over 100,000 hours last year—equivalent to over half of the staff time. Said Dinh, "We simply couldn't help feed our community without them."

So, how can we encourage more young people to engage in volunteering?

In preparation for the food-sorting event, Cole was introduced to MobileServe, an app that simplifies the management and verification of community service hours. Through the mobile interface, he effortlessly verified and logged his two-hour shift, which is now permanently affixed to his profile, thus initiating his (hopefully lifelong and rewarding) community service record.

This platform has the potential to motivate more teenagers to get involved with local nonprofit organizations. It gamifies the process of accumulating hours and provides a clear record of one's efforts that can become invaluable when sharing accomplishments with friends, organizations, and schools.

Kensington Eats is planning more community service opportunities catered to youngsters helping them create a MobileServe profile so they can start building out their personalized community service history. Our next event will be on January 6, 2024, at 11am at the Food Bank's Warehouse in Concord. To sign up or for more information visit www.kensingtoneats.com or email kensingtoneats@gmail.com.

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YEAR IN REVIEW

Thank you to our clients and community for making 2023 such a memorable year! We remain committed to our purpose—growing community through real estate—and we look forward to practicing real estate as a force for good in 2024. Below are a few of our proudest moments from the past year:

We expanded our reach to Sonoma County by launching Zip Code Sonoma and opened an office right on Sonoma Plaza! Plans to visit wine country? Stop by to say hello!



Our agents closed 30 transactions totaling over \$35.2M in sales (as of 11/12/2023). To check out our recent sales and latest listings, visit zipcodeeastbay.com/selling



We welcomed two new members to our team: Nicole Coreas, REALTOR and Arielle Chu, Director of Operations



from zip code east bay



Broker Josh Dickinson received the prestigious EverGreen Award from the National Association of REALTOR's Green REsource Council in recognition of exceptional environmental leadership.



We raised \$7,500 at our 5th annual Colusa Circle 5K to support KIDS for the BAY's environmental ed programs for under-resourced elementary schools in the East Bay.



We gave more than 5% of our profits to local community organizations, including paying a voluntary institutional Shuumi land tax to Sogorea Te' Land Trust.



We continued our community initiatives by hosting local clean ups & our annual recycling drives that helped divert used batteries and art supplies from the waste stream.



Thank you for being a valued neighbor. We look forward to helping you with all of your home buying or selling needs in both the East Bay and wine country!





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