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KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

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Two Kensington Hilltop Icons Retire



On June 9, in the multipurpose room at Kensington Hilltop Elementary School, two longtime teachers, Csilla Fenczik and Sadhana Shastri, were celebrated for their years of service to Kensington. The two retired at the end of this school year. From left, art teacher Winoka Turin, Csilla Fenczik, Sadhana Shastri, Anne Forrest, and Jean Stenquist. Turin, Forrest, and Stenquist are past colleagues. The event drew former students, past principal Judy Sanders, and the Kensington Enrichment Foundation's Jessica Marantz, among many others. Photo by Suzan Stephens.

By Linnea Due

On Monday, June 9, teachers, principals, students, some retired and on to new pursuits, some just starting the first grade, others anywhere in between, joined together to pay tribute to two long-time and beloved teachers at Kensington Hilltop Elementary School. Sadhana Shastri began teaching at Kensington in 2006,

while Csilla Fenczik started a physical education program in 2008. Both came into teaching through volunteering with their children's classes, Shastri initially with her daughters and Fenczik with her sons. And both retired at the end of this school year, on June 11. These are their stories.

[See Teachers page 5](#)

Don't miss one of Kensington's banner events: the Wild Things animal show Thursday, August 14, on the lawn outside the Community Center. See page 3 and library events on page 10 for more.





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Empowering Our Neighborhoods: Red Flag Day Parking and a Community Vision for Safety

By Johnny Valenzuela

As wildfire risk intensifies across California, Kensington must prepare not just with policy, but with people. With our unique topography, narrow roads, and a growing population, the question we must ask ourselves isn't if we're ready, but how we will get ready—together.

One of the most visible ways we're working toward readiness is through the development of Kensington's own Red Flag Day Parking Program—a hyper-local, collaborative initiative that ensures our streets are clear for emergency access during Red Flag Warnings. But this program is more than just parking restrictions—it's a gateway into a broader community-led strategy to enhance public safety, support neighbor-to-neighbor collaboration, and build long-term resilience.

Last year, the City of El Cerrito launched a Red Flag Parking Pilot on several key streets, which will expand this year. From June through November, "No Parking on Red Flag Days" signs are posted on one side of designated streets. During the pilot phase, these restrictions are not enforced through fines or towing. Instead, they serve as a powerful awareness tool to promote resident participation in ensuring emergency evacuation and fire department access.

Inspired by this effort, the Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) is developing a parallel program—one that is not simply copied from another jurisdiction but rooted in the voices and realities of our streets.

Kensington's Street Layout Presents Singular Challenges

Kensington is unique. Every street—and often each end of a single street—has its own challenges. High curbs, narrow passages, deep drainage, and unmanaged vegetation complicate emergency access. There's simply not enough room for parking on both sides of the street in many areas. Add to this a growing number of households and drivers, and it becomes clear: blanket policies won't work here. This parking program won't be effective from a top-down approach. It requires your input and lived experiences to shape the most effective and relevant solutions.

The approach for Kensington will provide all residents with a process to engage their neighbors, collect feedback, and begin identifying options for their neighborhood. We're excited to work with residents street-by-street to understand their lived experiences, concerns, and ideas for improving parking and evacuation access.

This approach isn't about signs—it's about neighbors. When residents come together to plan smarter parking, reduce roadside hazards, and get involved in preparedness programs, we can build solutions that work for them, not just theoretical plans. This will take into consideration their lifestyle changes, demographic changes, and needs.

The Red Flag Parking Program is just one part of a larger mosaic of efforts the KFPD is undertaking to build a more prepared and connected Kensington. Here's what's happening:

Hazardous Vegetation Removal Reimbursement Grant

Aiming to reduce the most hazardous plant species like juniper and bamboo, this reimbursement grant helps residents clear hazards, especially near roadways, to improve fire safety and parking access. Learn more at www.kensingtonfire.org/grant

Firewise Community Development

We're working to expand Firewise USA participation to every corner of Kensington. It's not just a designation—it's a commitment to safer homes and stronger neighborhoods. To join or learn more, contact me directly: jvalenzuela@kensingtonfire.org

Home Hardening and Defensible Space

New programs are being developed to help residents protect their homes from ember intrusion and create defensible space around their properties.

Home Assessment Ambassador Training (Coming Soon)

We're exploring an opportunity to bring Cal Fire's home assessment training to Kensington. This would allow trained volunteers to work in pairs and provide non-regulatory guidance to neighbors, increasing community knowledge and leveraging competent and talented community resources to amplify the hard work being done by our fire department.

Community Event – Mark Your Calendars!

Kensington's biggest block party is planned for October 11, 2025. It will celebrate community resilience, with fun, education, and resources for all

Red Flag Email Alerts

Stay in the loop! Sign up for Red Flag Warning notifications and receive essential tips during wildfire season: www.kensingtonfire.org/redflag

We have an all-hands-on-deck approach. Whether you rent or own, you are fully empowered to influence how we prepare for emergencies—on your street, in your neighborhood, and across the entire community.

Our first Firewise community was launched in June 2023. Since then, momentum has grown quickly. Today, we're on track to establish 18 Firewise neighbors in all four corners of Kensington, with more expected to follow.

We're not just preparing for wildfires but building a more connected, resilient Kensington. Please contact me to learn how we can improve safety and preparedness on your street.

Johnny Valenzuela, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator
jvalenzuela@kensingtonfire.org

What's In an Acronym?

By Sylvia Elsbury, president, Kensington Community Council

Everyone knows that around here, K stands for Kensington, right? But the names of local entities and organizations can all sound the same, seeming to require inside knowledge of what on earth they signify. Acronyms blanket this community like fog in summer, and confusion over their meanings is just as commonplace. Here to help: the *Outlook's* K-group primer.

Let's begin with KCC, the Kensington Community Council, publisher of the *Outlook*. As board president of KCC, I am often mistaken for an elected official. But KCC is not a public agency, it's a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit. And although the *Outlook* is a long-time service provided by KCC, local news is not the organization's primary mission.

KCC's role in the community arose from Kensington's status as a very small unincorporated area of Contra Costa County. Having no City Hall with departments such as Parks & Rec, Kensington residents receive recreation services—classes and events for all ages, plus the well-subscribed summer camp for those sixth grade and under—via a contract between KCC and a local government agency, the KPPCSD. (Like a matryoshka doll, KCC even has another acronym embedded within it: KASEP, which stands for Kensington Afterschool Enrichment Program.)



Unlike KCC, the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPCSD) actually is a governing agency called a California special district. KPPCSD manages the police department, public parks, and garbage/recycling services. A board of elected officials and a small staff do the work of the KPPCSD. Its unwieldy name perhaps explains why acronyms are such a thing in Kensington. But if you haven't yet, don't bother committing this one to memory: the KPPCSD moniker is about to become obsolete, simplified to Kensington Community Services District (KCSD). And if history is any guide, folks will shorten this further to the CSD in common parlance about town, as was the case in years past, when the KCSD acronym was previously in use.

Along with KPPCSD, KFPD is also destined for the scrap heap of discarded acronyms in the near future. The Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) will soon be dissolved, and responsibility for fire and emergency medical response services will transfer to the CSD (see above).

Believe it or not, there's yet another government-affiliated K-group in our midst: KMAC, the Kensington Municipal Advisory Council, whose members are appointed by the West Contra Costa County Supervisor, currently John Gioia. Concerned with land use quality-of-life matters, like Kensington's view ordinance and the size of that deck your neighbor is adding on, KMAC is seldom in the news but often makes an impact.

We have now finished with government agencies, but we're not at all finished with Kensington's acronyms. If you're a Kensington parent, KEF is likely one of the first K-groups you'll encounter. On the first day of school, you'll learn that KEF, the Kensington Education Foundation, is a private nonprofit enhancing public education in Kensington. KEF's programs include reading support, science lab, phys ed and classes in the arts, which are integrated into the weekly schedules of all students at Kensington Hilltop Elementary School (KHS). Founded decades ago by local parents, KEF holds the annual Garden Party fundraiser, a beloved Kensington tradition.

Book lovers know FKL, the Friends of Kensington Library, for their many good works and events, including their wildly popular twice-yearly used book sales. Like KEF, FKL brings private funding to the public sphere, beefing up the library's special events budget and benefiting all in the community. An info page for FKL can be found on the library's website, ccclib.org.



Ever wonder who owns and operates the signboard near the gas station, and the Arlington and Colusa info kiosks? Those belong to the Kensington Improvement Club (KIC), which for many decades has donated money, labor and leadership to spruce up Kensington's public spaces and facilities. KIC also hosts a live candidates' forum in election years, and publishes the hyper-local history book, *About Kensington*, which is sold at Raxakoul Coffee & Cheese.

Those who follow local politics will be familiar with KPOA, the Kensington Property Owners Association (kpoa.net). KPOA is an advocacy group that examines and often takes positions on local issues of concern to its members, and endorses candidates for public office. Over the years, KPOA has hosted informative public forums, often in partnership with KIC; one of these was a deep dive into the prospects for undergrounding power lines in Kensington.

Our local ham radio enthusiasts, who may well save us all in the next disaster, boast the lengthiest of Kensington's acronyms: KARO-ECHO. This nonprofit comprises the Kensington Amateur Radio Operators and the El Cerrito Ham Operators (on the web at karoecho.net). Members keep their skills honed with regular practice, and in late June held an event in Kensington Park, sharing their know-how and enthusiasm with the public.

Formed in 2021, Good Guest Kensington (GGK) is one of the newest K-groups, and has been very active in raising awareness and forming partnerships in our community. Supporting the town of Kensington to live as good guests on Lisjan Nation land, GGK has an excellent website (goodguestkensington.org) that makes it easy to see what they're up to and get involved.

Another of Kensington's newer K-groups, Kensington Pathkeepers, does not use an acronym (!) but must be included in this roundup, as much has been achieved since its formation in 2018. (See the June issue of the *Outlook* for the Pathkeepers' latest achievements and a letter from Pathkeeper Rodney Paul in this issue.) As advocates for the preservation of Kensington's public paths, the Kensington Pathkeepers work for all who traverse our community on foot. Join the movement at kensingtonpathkeepers.org.

As we've seen, in multisyllabic Kensington, it's only natural to abbreviate using acronyms. I hope this primer helps decipher them. My own Kensington acronym journey began more than 20 years ago at KNS, the Kensington Nursery School co-op attended by my children. In time I got the hang of it, and you can too!

(If you know of a K-group not covered here, or have background to add about any that are, we hope you'll send a letter about it to the *Outlook's* editor.)

Teachers

...from Front Page



First Came the Fun Stuff

Csilla Fenczik and her husband Dale Warnock moved to Kensington in 2006. Both sons began attending Kensington Hilltop Elementary, Sacha in the third grade and Erich in the first grade. And the two boys began playing sports in youth leagues in El Cerrito. Fenczik, who has a PhD in biology, coached Erich's youth baseball team (the Pinto Padres) and helped her husband coach the youth soccer team. She discovered she really enjoyed coaching kids, something she had never done before.

She soon got involved at Hilltop, doing parties and field trips with her sons' classes (as she calls it, "the fun stuff.") Around the time they moved to Kensington, an occasional prep teacher would come to teach physical education, but that program was soon cut. Parents began agitating for a PE component, and the Kensington Enrichment Foundation (KEF) stepped in to fund a program.

At the same time, the state mandated that all public schools must provide a certain number of minutes a week of PE. Then-principal Judy Sanders asked Fenczik and several other mothers if they would provide thirty minutes a week of PE, separate from recess, to Kensington classes. Fenczik, with her coaching experience behind her, said yes, as did three others. After a few years, the other mothers dropped off, and Fenczik took on the program herself.

"I would never have sought out a job like this," she says now, after 17 years of teaching physical education from kindergarten to sixth grade. "But it was fun. I really enjoyed myself."

Her program had to be adapted to the different age levels. "I came up with all the program myself," she says. "For the upper grades, I started with the basics of specific sports. Fifth grade was a special case, because I had to get the fifth graders ready for the statewide physical fitness test."

Things had to be simpler for the lower grades. "And kindergarten was completely different. There I tried to make everything not oriented to specific sports, but just developing throwing and catching skills. I made up games that they thought were fun but they were really working on specific skills."

Fenczik was endlessly creative. "We had four-wheel scooters, and we would do scooter basketball. We did soccer that way too. I did stuff with pool noodles. We did team-building. And I incorporated sports that they might not run across, like pickleball. So they could see they didn't need to be a basketball player to do sports, and that sports and fitness were done over a lifetime."

She explained that the teachers would come down to the playground with their class.

"The teachers would take over discipline if necessary. But some classes were so well behaved we could do tons of stuff. With the older kids, we'd do dribbling drills, passing drills, then you could put it together for a scrimmage."

The teachers funded by KEF teach from kindergarten to sixth grade. Which meant that Fenczik could watch a child progress from barely able to catch a beach ball to scoring three-pointers. And she knew the vibe of various classes and could create fun situations that she knew would appeal to that particular group of kids.

An injury last year brought up the idea of retiring. That injury had mellowed, but she says, "It just seemed time anyway." When her husband stops working, the two plan to travel. And she wants to become more involved in political activism: "It's important right now." But beyond that, she says, it's too soon to know what she'll be doing. "I'm still developing the plans."

Something we can know for sure: Fenczik will be a hard act to follow.



"Each Child Is a Jewel."

Although Sadhana Shastri began volunteering at Kensington Hilltop in the early '90s, she waited until her two daughters were in high school and her son at Hilltop before heading back to college for a teaching credential. "I got active in classes at Kensington," she said, "and in time I realized teaching was something I loved doing." After she graduated from the credentials program, she began applying to schools in the district.

She got an offer to teach fifth grade at Washington School in Richmond—but the same day got an offer to teach first grade at Hilltop. "I would obviously go to Kensington," she said. "It's five minutes away and was my first choice."

Teaching third grade has always been her favorite. "They know how to read, and they're innocent and curious. They're so sweet. It's a lovely age." She said that she also liked first grade, though she spent most of her career with third graders. "In first grade they come in not knowing how to read and by the end, they know how. That's satisfying."

Shastri is sad to retire. "Well, I really love teaching. I could do it my whole life and would continue doing it. But this is a time in my life when I want to be doing other things with my family and my husband. We want to travel. A lot of my family is in India. And this is a good time to retire when I am still very active."

She paused. "Teaching is full-time. You think about every child in your class. Each child is a jewel. You want to do the best for each one of them, make them shine. It's a demanding profession, but it is very rewarding."

Shastri wrote a letter the day after her last day of teaching to everyone in Kensington: "I look forward to my retirement and life beyond retirement with great excitement but also with a tinge of sadness as a wonderful chapter of my life draws to a close."

"It was a sunny Monday at the end of August 1993, as I drove up to Kensington School for the first time. Our two girls, Anjali and Aditi, were eight and six, and our son Dhananjai was a mere two-month-old baby. We filled in the registration papers. Anjali would start third grade and Aditi second. School started the next day. That was the beginning of our long association with Kensington Hilltop Elementary School and the Kensington community."

"Teaching was my second career. From being a French to English translator/interpreter for several years, I glided into motherhood and family."

"I was a regular volunteer in my children's classes, and over the years, I came to the realization that I really enjoyed teaching. As my children grew older, with enthusiastic support and encouragement from my wonderful husband, Lokendra, and the cooperation of my sweet children, I went back to school and got my teaching credential. My first teaching position was first grade at Hilltop Elementary, and I never looked back."

"I have been teaching at Kensington since 2006. I taught first grade for a few years, a kindergarten/first combination class one year, and third grade for most of my teaching career."

"It has been a pleasure to be a part of the Kensington School and community. They have been thoughtful, caring, supportive and always ready for a laugh."

"Teaching at Kensington for me has always been inspiring. The students are curious, lively and ready for challenges, and the parents are supportive and committed to make this school a great experience for their kids."

"As part of Kensington Hilltop Elementary and the larger Kensington community for almost 32 years now, I have had the good fortune of meeting and knowing so many remarkable people. I will be leaving with a heart filled with wonderful memories."

And as teachers and students and administrators expressed at the retirement celebration June 9, Shastri and Fenczik have created their own wonderful memories for everyone with the good fortune to know them.

ACC to Host National Night Out—Drop By for Pizza



By Susan Russell
Arlington Community Church (ACC) will host a National Night Out gathering on Tuesday, August 5, from 5-7pm. Pizza, popcorn, and ice cream sundaes will be served to those in the neighborhood.
“If there were ever a time when we needed our neighbors, it’s now! This is an opportunity to come together as a community, building connections and developing relationships of mutual support,” says Jen Chapman, pastor at ACC.
National Night Out, a crime and drug prevention event, involves over 17,000 communities nationwide from all 50 states. It is designed to build crime and drug prevention awareness, generate support for local anti-crime efforts, and strengthen neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships.
National Night Out, 52 Arlington Ave., August 5, 5-7pm.

Group for Men Open to New Kensington Members

By Ray Dennen
Want to have some fun and fellowship? Would you like to become a SIR? What in the heck is a SIR?
SIR stands for Sons in Retirement. SIR is a nonprofit corporation formed in the 1950s for retired men that now has more than 9,000 members in 90 branches throughout Northern California. We welcome all men. Membership is open to men, regardless of age, race, color, religion or national origin. Here in West Contra Costa we have two branches that meet on either the first Thursday of the month or on the second Thursday of the month, year-round. Our meetings include delicious lunches, refreshments, friendly conversation and interesting scheduled speakers throughout the year.
Additionally, and this is the important part., our members enjoy a variety of inside and outside activities. We offer bowling, golf, bocce, card and board games, hobbies and travel, and so many more. Outside of our monthly “Men Only” meetings, our activities are coed. As a capper we have about three big social events per year. You can pick what you want or not want to do. We have no agenda except to have fun and enjoy each other’s company.
We are looking for new members. There are no initiation fees and no dues. You pay for lunches and any alcoholic refreshments.
In the near future, we may be able to start a branch here in Kensington depending on your response. Call us at one of the numbers below.
Here are the membership requirements: Be a man who is friendly, who enjoys people and would enjoy participating in some fun activities. Sound like you? Then contact one of the following executive members with your questions.
If you would like to attend one of our meetings, we will provide you with a free lunch as our guest. For more information, go to SIRinc.org.
Brion Beetz, 925-899-2527; Jim Wilson 510-409-9526; Ray Dennen 510-384-4824.

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Passings

Kenneth Andrew Brunetti, a co-founder and partner in the San Francisco law firm Brunetti Rougeau, died at his Kensington home April 26 at the age of 60. Brunetti launched the law firm with Gregory Rougeau in 2016, specializing in bankruptcy and civil litigation. He was named a California Super Lawyer in recognition of his professional achievements.
He had previously specialized in complex litigation and bankruptcy work as a partner at Diamond McCarthy in San Francisco. He had also been a partner at Greenfield Sullivan, and before that, a partner at Miller & Van Eaton, where he worked on telecommunications litigation. He began his career as an associate at Steefel, Levitt & Weiss and served as a judicial extern for California Supreme Court Justice Stanley Mosk.
Born in Berkeley on July 15, 1964, Brunetti spent his early years in Minneapolis. He returned to the Bay Area in 1977 and graduated from Albany High School in 1982. He attended the University of Pennsylvania, where he earned his B.A. in psychology in 1986. As a student at University of California, Hastings College of the Law, he served as Note Editor of the Hastings Law Journal, and authored an article in which he argued for the creation of a Bay Area regional government. His honors at Hastings included Order of the Coif and Thurston Society. He earned his J.D. degree in 1991, graduating Magna Cum Laude with a class rank of four (out of 505).
Brunetti will be most remembered for being passionate, gregarious, and intellectually curious. He could talk about anything with anyone. He was a devotee of big cities, with a special interest in urban planning, as noted by his early-career activism with SPUR, the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association. His big ideas and love for San Francisco convinced most of those who knew him that he could have been mayor. He was an avid fan of the San Francisco Giants, the Green Bay Packers, and NCAA basketball. He also loved trains of all kinds, fascinated by both the vehicles themselves and the way they romanticized the rural side of countries.
He loved his wife, children, and extended family. He was a devoted and engaged father who was proud of his kids’ achievements, independence, and equally matched passion.
Brunetti is survived by his wife, Andrea Tung; his daughter, Natalia; his son, Keenan; his parents, Jerry and Barbara Brunetti; his brother Chris Brunetti; his sisters Keerilyn Brunetti, Andrea Brunetti, and Maria Ellison.
A memorial celebrating Brunetti’s life will be held at Northbrae Community Church on Saturday, July 12, 11am-3pm. All friends and relatives of Brunetti are invited to participate.



It is with sadness that we announce the passing of **BeBe Barrett**, who died peacefully in her sleep on Monday, May 26, at the age of 92.
BeBe lived a life brimming with adventure, embracing every moment to its fullest. She was a world traveler, an artist, and a philosopher, radiating a glowing presence that brought light and joy to everything she did and everyone she met.
In the early 1980s, BeBe embarked on a unique artistic endeavor: creating life masks. She had this idea to capture people’s personalities through plaster impressions of their faces, which she would then adorn with vibrant colors, feathers, beads, and other imaginative ornaments. The process required her subjects to sit still for several hours while she carefully applied layers of gauze and plaster. To keep them entertained and still, BeBe would share captivating stories, engage in lively conversations, and find

other creative ways to pass the time.
Her mask-making journey was not without its memorable moments. One amusing instance involved a subject with a beard and mustache.
Despite applying generous amounts of Vaseline to ensure easy removal, BeBe quickly discovered that facial hair still posed a challenge for plaster. While she remained outwardly calm, reassuring her patient subject that “it’s normal” and would just take a little longer, she was secretly trying to figure out how to extricate him from the mask.
Meanwhile, her subject waited patiently with breathing straws in his nostrils, eager to be liberated. It was truly remarkable how she convinced over a thousand people to sit still for hours for this process, and even more so, how they all walked away as friends.
BeBe’s vibrant spirit and unique ability to connect with people will be greatly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing her. BeBe is survived by her two sons, Jim and Andy Shalaby, as well as her grandchildren Gabriel, Vanessa, and Julian Shalaby.
Editor’s Note: Bebe Barrett was a familiar figure in Kensington, walking for miles each day, in earlier years accompanied by her two poodles, one standard, one miniature. Even into her late eighties, Bebe still walked miles, often carrying a festive umbrella and dressed in colorful outfits. Those lucky enough to catch her sitting on her front porch might be invited inside to enjoy her artworks and her drawings of the day. She will be greatly missed.



A Primer on Social Media: What We All Need to Know



By Anya Behn
Recently our Kensington Hilltop Elementary PTA put on a showing of *Screenagers* for parents to better understand ways to deal with kids’ screen time and what kids may be seeing and learning online. Understanding the effects of spending hours on the Internet on children and adults is important, because we are all affected and perhaps changed by it.
What Is Social Media?
Social media is the term for company-controlled proprietary protocol applications (apps) where you can chat with or follow people. Your friends, family, and people who create content must be on these apps to keep you interested. The application’s algorithms put someone’s post in your “feed” that it thinks you will like. Why? Because then you will spend more of your precious time there. Your social media “feed” is literally what the company is feeding you to sell more ads.
The most common social media applications are: TikTok (focused on short videos), YouTube (videos, comments), Instagram (images & video), Discord (chat groups), WhatsApp (chat, calls), Bluesky (open-protocol twitter), Substack (long-form writing), SnapChat (disappearing images), LinkedIn (work focus), Facebook (posts, images, videos) and Twitter/X (short posts).
Why Does Social Media Matter?
There are numerous reasons, but for now we will tackle two: the impact on children and on privacy. Social media and video games are designed for profit, not children’s well-being. One in two under-18 kids struggle with addiction to digital devices. Harassment, eating disorders, suicide, and online sexual abuse are soaring.
Scientific studies show dramatically negative effects, where social media images, videos, and bullying decimate self-esteem and realistic beauty, body, and life views. Much of what is posted is professionally produced, but posters pretend it isn’t.
In addition, violent content in social media and video games have been shown to decrease empathy in children.
There is a direct relationship between the amount of time spent online and depression and low self-esteem. The more time spent online, the worse people feel. Time online isn’t as rich as offline.
And then there are privacy concerns. The more an app company knows about you, the easier you are to manipulate. The company’s goal is to keep you on its app for as long as possible. This is so they can sell more ads to show you, and collect behavior, location, and other data specific to you and/or your child, in order to send more targeted ads and make more money. And on it goes.
Text messages, email, contacts, health data, location history...Apps could previously just take this data without asking. And many people, in an effort to save time, just click Accept when asked for permissions to collect or share data with other parties.
One example is Facebook infamously grabbing people’s contacts without asking for permission. This way they could recommend more of your connections and contact those people directly to get more people joining, which is required for social media. Facebook now owns WhatsApp and Instagram.
And there can be employment effects. What your kids or you post can be around for a long time. Potential employers now review your social media posts and likes. What you posted as a lark at age 16 could be ruinous at 24.
What Can You Do?
Wait. Just don’t give your kids a smart phone until after 8th grade. It’s your choice. www.waituntil8th.org
Monitor social media with your child. Talk about what they are seeing and why they are seeing it to gain critical thinking skills.
For child-appropriate content, I recommend changing browser settings to not show adult content.
I suggest having time limits around internet use. Some people have a contract with their child with the expectations, limits, and consequences clearly written out and agreed upon. This can be a positive vehicle for ongoing conversations. Remember, in-person interactions have more dimensions than online.
For privacy protection, I recommend using a browser and search engine with less tracking. Web browsers tracking you less are the Brave browser, DuckDuckgo browser, Firefox Focus, LibreWolf, Epic Privacy browser, and Mullvad browser among others.
Search engines with less tracking are DuckDuckGo search, Brave search, Ecosia, MetaGer, and Qwant. To change your default Internet search engine, go to your web browser Settings and find “Search Engines.”
Proton.me is working on privacy storage and email.
Screen-time and distractions: Request schools not have most homework online. It’s incredibly distracting, because the kids are in a web browser, and YouTube exists, if

you see what I mean. We are not in a pandemic anymore, so why is this still happening? Doing homework online can blow screen-time limits to bits.
How to Find Out More
For an example screen-time contract, go to www.psychologytoday.com and search for “screen time contract.”
A docudrama on Netflix, “The Social Dilemma,” is about how personal data and ad-bidding work and the intentional design of addictiveness into apps. It is well worth watching.
View research and essays on Internet effects on children (and adults) by Shoshana Zuboff and others. And see these, specifically for children: The 5 Rights Foundation for children: www.5rightsfoundation.com and Digital Futures for Children Centre: www.digital-futures-for-children.net
A documentary on HBO/MAX, “Surveilled with Ronan Farrow,” tells how much surveillance we live under without realizing it.
“The Sirens’ Call” by Chris Hayes is about the attention economy.
Books by Douglas Rushkoff on the common thinking in the tech industry: the greed and infinite growth mentality (which is not possible).
“On the Media” podcast by WNYC Studios, June 4, 2025.
Screenagers film. It’s a pay-to-view film. www.screenagersmovie.com
Keep in Touch
If you have kids in school, I am interested in hearing what apps they have access to and use a lot. What are your favorites? Do you notice specific downsides to it? Upsides?
I’d love to hear your responses and questions about this and other technology situations. Email me at anya@anyas.tech or leave a message at 415-523-6553.
Kensington resident Anya Behn has spent many years in the software and internet industry, with jobs from technical support to director to technical product management. Please send questions at the above email to be shared in future columns.

Black Wealth Builders Fund Celebrates Success

By Susan Russell
Arlington Community Church (ACC) announced that the Black Wealth Builders Fund has now raised \$950,000 and provided 46 loans to first-time Black homebuyers throughout the East Bay.
“We’re so grateful for all of the neighbors, faith communities, and community partners who have contributed so far,” said Rev. Jen Chapman, pastor at ACC. “The loans that have been given are definitely something to celebrate! Now we just have to figure out how to keep it going, so more families can get the boost they need to be able to purchase their first home.”
Nearly all the funds raised have been loaned out, and for the first time the fund has a waiting list of applicants. ACC and its partners are now working to raise more money to keep the fund going.
ACC launched the Black Wealth Builders Fund in 2021 as a way to repair some of the damage of racist and white supremacist housing policies. The fund provides zero-interest loans to first-time Black homebuyers for down payment assistance. The loans don’t have to be paid back until the property is refinanced or sold.
The fund is housed at Richmond Community Foundation. Candidates for the fund are qualified by Richmond Neighborhood Housing Services, a HUD-certified housing agency.
Contributions to the Black Wealth Builders fund can be made using the QR code or here: https://give.richmondefc.org/check-out_participant/388177.
Checks may be sent to the Richmond Community Foundation, 3260 Blume Dr., Suite 110, Richmond, CA 94806. (Please indicate *Black Wealth Builders Fund* in the memo line). All contributions are fully tax-deductible.



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KASEP-Kensington After School Program

Mark your calendars for the Fall KASEP Registration on Tuesday, September 2nd, 2025. Classes begin Monday, September 8th. The fall brochure will be available online mid-August

¡Viva Español! Spanish classes will be back this fall, offered after school for K-6th grade on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Reserve your spot now at www.vivaelespanol.org/classes/at-your-school



Summer Schedule for Adult and Family Classes

Cardio Dance with Karma Smart

Has moved to Tuesdays 10-11am
Community Center - Cost \$15 drop in or register online

Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi

Wednesdays & Fridays from 9:30-11:00am
Community Center - Drop-in fee is \$15

Yoga with Anja Borgstrom

Strength & Balance Yoga -Tuesdays at 8:30am
Community Center - Cost is \$20 drop in or register online

Family Yoga in the Park with Lori Hess

Saturday 7/5 and Saturday 7/19.
Please contact Lori Hess waytoglowkidsyoga@gmail.com with questions about the class.

*New Class Chair Yoga w/ Angi Love

Thursdays 10-11am
Community Center - Cost is \$15 drop in or register online

** Try a free class on July 17th**

Chair Yoga is a gentle form of yoga practiced while sitting on a chair or using a chair for support. This class is designed especially for seniors but is accessible to all ages, fitness levels, and mobility levels. Enjoy the benefits of yoga—including improved flexibility, strength, balance, and relaxation—in a safe and supportive environment. No experience needed!

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

Free Workshop for Seniors

Community Center Saturday July 19th 1-3pm
Senior Fall Prevention and Core Strengthening Seminar. This informative session is designed to empower older adults with practical tools to improve balance, stability, and strength—key elements in reducing the risk of falls. As we age, maintaining a strong core and steady mobility becomes essential for staying active and independent. We'll explore effective exercises, safety strategies, and lifestyle habits that support long-term health and confidence. Whether you come for yourself or a loved one, our goal is to provide actionable insights that promote safer movement and a better quality of life. Let's take the first step together. Call the KCC office to secure your spot 510-525-0292.

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



Follow us on Instagram
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A paella dinner will be served at the Rock in the Redwoods benefit.

Little Marvin and the Gardeners Are Back in Town

By Marion Henon

Rock in the Redwoods is back at Coventry Grove in Kensington! Prior to the pandemic, the rock cover band, Little Marvin and the Gardeners, performed several concerts to benefit a local nonprofit youth organization, Yes Nature to Neighborhoods. While YES has stepped away from having a concert benefit this year, the good news is that the fundraising continues for another worthy organization, Camping Unlimited.

Camping Unlimited sends children who have developmental disabilities to camp, with a warm and supportive atmosphere of planned permissiveness that encourages community, recreation, education and adventure and fun in beautiful natural surroundings. At the same time, this program provides out-of-home respite to parents and caregivers of the daily demands of care and supervision.

The band is excited to host another community-fueled event at this magical spot and get everyone dancing and swaying for a fun evening of music and good cheer. The event will be held Saturday, September 6 and includes a paella dinner. Visit www.RockintheRedwoods for more details.



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Get ready for
Movie Night
September 20

Want to Participate? Come to a Meeting!

Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District

July 10, August 14
7pm at the Kensington Community
Center

Kensington Fire Protection District Board

July 16, August 20
7pm at the Kensington Community
Center

Emergency Preparedness Committee

July 24, August 28
4pm at the Kensington Community
Center

KARO-ECHO

July 14, August 11
7pm at the Kensington Community
Center

Kensington Property Owners Association

Email KPOAssoc@gmail.com for
dates and times.

Kensington Improvement Club

July 28, August 25
7pm at the Kensington Community
Center, Room 3

Kensington Police Offer Big Assist in Two Berkeley Cases

From the Chief's Report to the KPPPCSD board

Our officers were crucial in resolving two violent felonies reported in Berkeley. In one case, officers found a stabbing victim from Berkeley. They accessed data from the Flock Community Safety Cameras and identified the suspect, who Berkeley PD subsequently arrested.

In the second incident, UC Berkeley Police reported a kidnapping near the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. UCPD promptly shared details regarding the vehicle, suspect, and victim with surrounding agencies. Kensington officers accessed the Flock Community Safety Camera data and learned the suspect's vehicle recently traveled through Kensington. Officers searched the area and located the suspect's vehicle on Arlington Ave. With assistance from University Police, they stopped and detained the suspect, ultimately turning the case over to the UC Police.

Both incidents demonstrate the value of technology in enhancing public safety.

When Do Crimes Occur?

Analysis of crime patterns revealed that most National Incident-Based Reporting System reportable crimes occurred between midnight and 3 a.m., and predominantly on Mondays and Tuesdays, prompting the KPD to enhance patrols during these peak times. The average response time of the department increased to 5.4 minutes from 5.3 minutes in April. The slight increase in average response time may be attributed to the 18.8 percent increase in dispatched calls. To address this, KPD is exploring optimized patrol routes and leveraging GPS fleet tracking to improve response efficiency

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Show How Sharp You Are at ACC’s Trivia Night

By Susan Russell

- What famous magazine started in the 700 block of San Francisco’s Brannan Street in 1967?
- Where most of a butterfly’s taste receptors are?
- How many spikes are on the Statue of Liberty’s crown?
- Which three NFL teams have never won a Super Bowl?

Come to the Arlington Community Church on Tuesday, July 15. Show off your trivia knowledge and laugh at some truly creative—and goofy—answers! The evening will be led by ex-coach and film analyst John Chapman, host of the popular *49ers Rush* podcast.

Teams and individual players are welcome. Players need to bring their phones to play, and snacks and prizes will be provided. ACC, July 15, 7:30pm, 52 Arlington Ave. There is easy parking across the street.



Trivia host John Chapman will keep players guessing—and entertained—on July 15.

Soakers in July, Wild Things in August: Don’t Miss Either One

By Jenny Rockwell

Enjoy free programs offered by the Kensington Library at 61 Arlington Avenue. Call 510-524-3043 with questions. Thank you to the Friends of Kensington Library for making library programs possible.

July

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

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

Tues, July 15, 2-5pm Cloth Produce Bag Sewing Circle Join the Kensington Seamsters Union, local 94707 in transforming donated natural fiber fabric into bags, which will be given out for free at the Kensington Farmers Market. We need you to help measure, cut, iron sew and thread drawstrings, and create community.

Tues, July 15, 6:30pm An Evening with the Kensington Pathkeepers Learn about the history of Kensington’s public foot paths established in the early 1900s. The Kensington Pathkeepers will talk about their work to restore and improve the paths, how you can walk the paths and get involved.

Thursday, July 17, 2pm DIY SUPER SOAKERS! An event so amazing we had to capitalize it. Come in and build your own super soaker. Parents help gladly welcomed. After everyone has built their soakers, we will test them by soaking everyone except the librarian. (Okay, maybe you can squirt him too.) This event will take place at Kensington Community Center, 59 Arlington Ave (up the hill from the library).

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

Tues, July 22, 6:15-7:45 Kensington Library Book Club The club meets online via Zoom, usually on the fourth Tuesday. The selection for July is *How It All Began* by Penelope Lively.

June 2 through August 2, Summer Reading The Contra Costa County Library’s 2025 all ages summer literacy program is all about games and play! Visit ccclib.org/summer. Every reader who completes a passport is eligible for a free book and a chance to win prizes.

Art Exhibit Mid-July to mid-Sept: Paintings by Elizabeth Weiss: www.lizpaintings.com

August

Fri, Aug 1, 3pm Crochet Lesson for Teens Come learn to crochet and take home your own hook and yarn. Open to all levels!

Tues, Aug 5, 6:30pm, Castoff’s Knitting Club Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month. Open to all levels of knitters. Bring your own yarn!

Tuesdays, Aug 5, 12, 19, 26, 6:30pm Family Storytime Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome.



Thursday, Aug 14, 1pm, Conservation Ambassadors’ Wild Things Don’t let summer end without coming to see Conservation Ambassadors’ Wild Things show. The show features live animals and will be on the lawn in front of the Kensington Community Center. We never know what animals they will bring, but it’s always amazing.

Tues, Aug 26, 6:15-7:45pm Kensington Library Book Club The club meets online via Zoom, usually on the fourth Tuesday of each month. The selection for August is *Sentimental Education* by Gustave Flaubert.

Tues, Aug 26, Read to a Dog Join us and a licensed therapy dog for a 15-minute reading session every fourth Tuesday afternoon, 3-4pm. Same day, drop in sign up starts 15 minutes before the read session.

Get to know Kensington Library's Digital Resources!

By Jenny Rockwell

Did you know that Contra Costa County Library offers dozens of digital resources, which can be found at <https://ccclib.org/resource>.

Here are a few ways to access and use them:

Watch tutorials at <https://my.nicheacademy.com/ccclib>

Explore the presentation by Kensington Library, which will familiarize you with some of our most popular and exciting offerings: tinyurl.com/digitalresourcepresentation

Attend a program at the library on September 20, where we will share information Come to the library anytime and ask for help!

Here are a few highlights of what digital resources we have available:

Kanopy: Stream independent, classic, international, critically-acclaimed films, documentaries, and TV shows. Kid-friendly version also available. Get started at: tinyurl.com/get-started-kanopy

Hoopla: Hoopla has movies, TV shows, music, eBooks, eAudiobooks, comics, and magazines. No holds or waiting lists. Selecting the Kids Mode will limit results to children’s content only. Get started at: tinyurl.com/get-started-hoopla

The *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*: Gain full access to these popular newspapers, no subscription required. Get started at: tinyurl.com/get-started-nyt & tinyurl.com/get-started-wsj

Rosetta Stone & Mango Languages: Language learning courses. Get started at: tinyurl.com/get-started-rosetta-stone and tinyurl.com/get-started-mango

Linkedin Learning: Thousands of online courses to learn in-demand skills from real-world industry experts. Learn business, creative, and technology skills to achieve your personal and professional goals. Get started at: tinyurl.com/get-started-linkedin-learning



The lower end of Solano Avenue, where it meets San Pablo Avenue, has long been home to great food—but lately, it feels like something new is blooming. There’s a fresh energy on the block, and it smells of espresso, cardamom, and toasted pistachio. That glow? It’s Lulu’s—a bright, inviting brunch and dinner spot from chef-owner Mona Leena Michael. With bold flavors, thoughtful design, and warm, attentive service, Lulu’s is quickly becoming a local favorite.

The moment you step inside Lulu’s, you’re met with a space that feels as joyful as it is stylish. Sunlight pours through tall windows, bouncing off sage-green walls and playful wallpaper patterned with pomegranates and poppies—a tribute to Chef Michael’s Palestinian roots and California’s natural beauty. The space is vibrant yet calm, with a balance of elegance and comfort, whether you’re seated at the bar, gathered with friends on the patio, or waiting for your table in the cozy front lounge.

At Lulu’s, the coffee bar doesn’t play second fiddle—it’s front and center. Signature drinks bring unexpected twists to classic café favorites: a smooth, naturally sweet date latte; a pistachio-cardamom latte that tastes like spring in a cup; and rotating specials that showcase seasonal inspiration. One standout, the Rose Brûlée Cappuccino, arrives with a delicate caramelized sugar lid—just waiting to be cracked open—delivering a blend of floral sweetness and rich espresso that makes one realize how boring a Grande Dark Roast from Starbucks really is.

For something cooler, try the Iced Strawberry Rose Matcha Latte or the Lemon Orange Blossom Spritz—refreshing and beautiful in equal measure.

Lulu’s is best known for its mezze brunch, a dish showcasing California’s bounty and meant for sharing with people you love. The full-size platter is beautifully plated with just enough audacity to turn heads and cause a little FOMO. Thankfully, the pared-down sampler version is thoughtfully portioned for two with the perfect amount of fresh breads, crisp crudité, falafel, and three house dips—serranogarlic hummus, muhammara, and labneh. Colorful flowers and fresh vegetables create a celebratory experience that delights all senses.

If your brunch tastes lean sweet, don’t miss the Baklava French Toast. Thick slices of custard-soaked Hawaiian rolls are wrapped in flaky filo, topped with crushed nuts, and drizzled with syrup. Crunchy, creamy, and rich—it’s comfort food reimaged.

A new mom herself, Chef Michael has made Lulu’s a space that welcomes everyone—



families included—with high chairs, kids’ plates, and even a changing table. Open hours give Chef Michael a chance to have a family life: Brunch is served Thursday-Sunday, while dinner hours are Thursday-Saturday.

Moving from its original location in Berkeley, Lulu’s relocation to Solano Avenue allowed Chef Michael to hone and scale her vision. We’re glad to have her closer because Lulu’s is a reflection of what Solano Avenue does best: community, creativity, and food with heart. Each bite, each sip, each glance at the thoughtful decor, and every warm interaction with the staff brings a smile to your face.

Lulu’s, 1106 Solano Ave., Albany

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KPPCSD Takes Public Ownership of Paths and More

By Linnea Due

On June 12, the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPCSD) met for its regular board meeting. Much of the time was spent on vital house-keeping: approving the budget for 2025-2026 (the district operates on a fiscal year) and approving the parks levy that will appear on Kensington residents’ tax bill in 2025-26. The levy is tied to the consumer price index for the greater Bay Area and provides funds to maintain the parks (Kensington Park and Elsie Neilson Park), including the tennis and basketball courts and picnic areas.

The board also voted to formally accept ownership of the three paths that had been identified by the county and the board as a start to public ownership of all 11 paths in Kensington: Ardmore, Coventry and Beloit paths. Kensington Pathkeepers’ Lisa Caronna applauded the board “for going where no board has gone before.” Attempting to take formal public ownership of the paths has been a multi-decades’ project. Director Sarah Gough made the motion to accept the real property, Sylvia Hacaj seconded, and the motion passed 4-0 (Cass Duggan was absent), to a wave of clapping and congratulations all around.

Caronna announced that a celebration would be held on July 26, with a path tour at 10am and a party at 11:30am and asked the board members to attend. (See Letters to the Editor for more.)

Interim General Manager David Aranda said that he had received an email questioning whether the four percent pay raise granted to the police would impact the budget. Aranda said that he believed the raise was within the budget parameters that consultant Ridgeline Municipal Strategies had projected for the next five years. “If we cannot retain police officers,” Aranda said, “the cost to the district may not be visible but it exists. There are costs for recruitment, training, the interview process, new uniforms and more.” Aranda said that if the department can retain officers for five years, “we come out ahead. To lose them over a year or two years is costly for the department.”

He also noted that Police Chief Mike Gancasz has reduced departmental costs, such as IT costs: “If you say the payroll is going to increase by x amount, you have to look at the overall cost of police operations,” he said. “The chief has been instrumental in reducing some costs...We’re going to see a reduction in pension retirement, and that’ll keep getting better...We’re never going to be at the top [of the pay scale of surrounding communities], and we don’t want to be at the bottom. Our officers deserve to make a good living. They put their lives on the line, any moment something could happen.”

The board also agreed to accept Director Cass Duggan’s resignation as of the date that the Kensington Fire Protection District is dissolved and KPPCSD (which will be called Kensington Community Services District or KCSD) takes over providing fire and emergency medical services. Directors explained that if Duggan resigned immediately the board would have to appoint someone to serve and then have to jump to 11 directors after the fire board members are absorbed into the new CSD. Instead, the new board will start with nine directors, which as terms end would gradually reduce to the mandated five. Duggan is resigning for health reasons, and each director praised her work ethic. Hacaj

noted that Duggan was “a passionate advocate for the park and for elderly residents in emergency preparedness. She always reminded people to take care of each other.”

In the final hour, the board explained how aspects of state law have made the search for a new home for the police more challenging. The Alquist-Priolo Act, signed into law in 1972, has special rules regarding building and renovating in known earthquake fault zones. Aranda explained that to build a new structure means making a study, which, he said, mostly means trenching, a costly enterprise and difficult or impossible on a narrow lot. In addition, “You can renovate a building as long as you don’t go above 50 percent [of its assessed value], and you can’t change the use or occupancy level.” He said that acquiring 219 Arlington would be changing the use from a residence to a police building and also increasing the occupancy. The fire district could renovate under these rules because the occupancy level of the Public Safety Building did not change nor did the use of the building. He concluded: “We would be changing the function of any building [we acquired] in Kensington.”

Which makes the district buying any home or building along the Arlington corridor a difficult enterprise, as the entire corridor lies within the Alquist-Priolo earthquake zone. Also, as a public commenter pointed out, the zone is enforceable, not the fault. A fault might not even lie within the zone, but if the building is in the zone, the rules apply—though single-family homes two stories or under are exempt.


Hacaj said, “I hope the public will take this to heart. The Alquist-Priolo zone makes the whole idea of converting a property very unattractive.”

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