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Bringing the Community Together

KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

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OCTOBER 2024

A PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

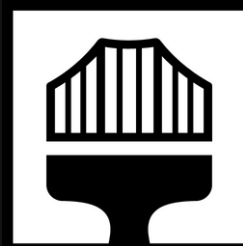
VOLUME 82 NUMBER 9

PAINTED *Contest* PUMPKIN

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Leigh Schneider with her two Bernese mountain dogs, Georgie and Mirabelle, on a rainy Sunday afternoon last year at Kensington's Blessing of the Animals. Photo by Jenny Parks.

Annual Blessing of the Animals Now Features a Pet Costume Parade

By Reverend Jen Chapman

Last October, on a drizzly Sunday afternoon, residents and neighbors of Kensington gathered to celebrate and bless their pets. Our dogs, cats, and other beloved creatures enrich our lives so deeply, and this opportunity to come together as a community and express our gratitude is a truly special event.

The Blessing of the Animals event is hosted each year by Arlington Community Church United Church of Christ as a feature of the Kensington Community Council's annual picnic. It's held on the south end of the lawn outside the Recreation Building (and in case of rain, like last year, we'll be under the Recreation Building's awning.)

This year's Blessing of the Animals will feature a pet parade with Halloween costumes encouraged! Even if you don't have a pet of your own, or aren't able to bring them, you can come to see your four-legged neighbors (and perhaps some scaly or feathered neighbors as well!) dressed in their Halloween best!

The event will be on Sunday, October 20, from 12:00-12:45pm. The pet parade will begin around 12:15, with each pet parent/family getting an opportunity to introduce and share

See Blessing, page 8

This Year Expect a Sunny KCC Picnic with Jazz, Bubbles, Art

By Sylvia Elsbury, Kensington Community Council board president

It's time to make plans with family, friends and neighbors to attend the Kensington Fall Picnic on Sunday, October 20, noon to 3pm. Come together or by yourself to this all-ages celebration of good cheer, good food and good music! Headlining the picnic are local musicians, the Great Space Coaster, returning for a third year to rock the Community Center lawn with your favorite hit songs of yesteryear. Lively tunes will also be performed by the wonderful Korematsu Middle School Jazz Band. Tasty picnic lunches sold by KCC include burgers, franks and veggie burgers freshly grilled onsite by members of the Kensington Hilltop School Auxiliary.

In October there are so many ways we celebrate community in Kensington. The annual picnic is one of our oldest traditions. Rain or shine, volunteers will be out in force to welcome you. Fabulous giant bubbles will rise from the magical wand of performer/creator Sterling Johnson. Besides dancing on the lawn and devouring picnic treats, the kiddos can create autumn art with KCC instructor



See Picnic, Page 3

Kensington and Beyond Update

October 2024



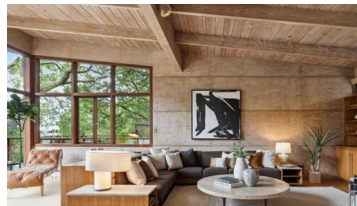
New Listing | 1015 Havens Place
El Cerrito Hills
Main House 5 BR | 3.5 BA | 3927 sqft.(+/-)
Attached: 2 BR | 1 BA | Separate guest space
OFFERED AT: \$1,895,000
To view online visit: 1015havens.com



SOLD | 31 Sunset Drive
Kensington | 3 BR | 1.5 BA | 1966 sqft.(+/-)
Mediterranean Villa
OFFERED AT: \$1,489,000
SOLD AT: \$1,600,000
To view online visit: 31sunset.com



SOLD | 308 Coventry Road
Kensington | 3 BR | 2 BA | 1404 sqft.(+/-)
Spanish bungalow a block from Colusa Circle
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SOLD AT: \$1,400,000
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SOLD | 2 Kenilworth Court
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If you are interested in knowing the value of your home or what is required to sell a home in this market, call me. The appointment is confidential and complimentary.



I am proud to be recognized as the #1 individual listing agent in Kensington for decades. It is my privilege to serve you.

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Kensington Market Update

JULY - SEPT 2024
9 Closed Sales
Median List Price: \$1,398,000
Median Sales Price: \$1,600,000
Median Sq. Ft.: 2145
Median Cost Per Sq. Ft.
List Price: \$691
Sales Price: \$773
Average Days on Market: 19

JULY - SEPT 2023
9 Closed Sales
Median List Price: \$1,095,000
Median Sales Price: \$1,515,000
Median Sq. Ft.: 1724
Median Cost Per Sq. Ft.
List Price: \$670
Sales Price: \$848
Average Days on Market: 15

10 Things That Make a House Hard to Sell

- You've priced too high**
Look at factual data, not algorithmic apps like Zillow when setting your price.
- Poor first impression**
If the exterior needs painting (A new color can be transformative) do it. Freshen up the landscaping. Put the garbage cans out of sight.
- Privacy or location is an issue**
Is your backyard a fish bowl, with no privacy? A neighbor's home is an eyesore? Busy streets and noise are also issues for buyers.
- Hiring an out-of-area agent or the wrong agent**
Agents who are unfamiliar with the area or lack a track record of successfully selling homes in your neighborhood.
- Poor timing**
Pay attention to the dates holidays fall on and avoid coming on the market on those weeks. Check the weather, sun sets.
- Not staging your home professionally**
Although staging is expensive the return far exceeds the cost.
- Refusing to negotiate**
Counter an offer, even if the price and terms don't meet your desired result. You might be surprised when the buyers accept your counter offer.
- Not addressing minor repairs**
Fix things like missing switch plates, dripping faucets, and sticking doors. Little issues like these imply a lack of maintenance.
- Unconventional layout**
A principal bedroom that is far away from other bedrooms. Parents want to be on the same floor as their children. Weird layouts, bad flow, and too many levels can impact the saleability.
- Making preparations for the sale**
Failing to paint, make repairs, landscaping, and order inspections to include in the disclosure packet will make your home less desirable.



If you are interested in knowing the value of your home or what is required to sell a home in this market, call me. The appointment is confidential and complimentary.

RUTH FRASSETTO, CRS
510.697.8606
ruth.frassetto@compass.com
DRE 00779030



Shreds and Meds October 26

By Johnny Valenzuela

Kensington Fire Protection District and Kensington Police Department will host a free paper shredding and pharmaceutical collection event on Saturday, October 26, from 10am-noon at the Unitarian Universalist Church's North Parking Lot at 1 Lawson Road, Kensington.

The Kensington Police Department, in coordination with the DEA, will facilitate the National Prescription Drug Take-Back campaign to safely dispose of all unused or expired medications, including narcotics, pills, syrups, inhalers, etc. It is important not to flush your unwanted medications down the toilet as they pollute drinking water and soil.

Please do not bring any household hazardous waste.

For more information, please visit the KFPD website: www.kensingtonfire.org.

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

NOVEMBER - 2024 DEADLINES

Advertising Deadline ❖ OCT. 8
Editorial Deadline ❖ OCT. 10

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

Use one space, not two, after all periods.

KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

EDITOR
LINNEA DUE
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ALMA KEY
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Editorial.....
editor@KensingtonOutlook.com
Advertising.....510-508-3241
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Letters to the Editor

Who's on First?

Dear Editor:

Kensington is wrapping up a \$9 million renovation of its public safety building (PSB), the most expensive capital project in Kensington's history. The PSB is now modern and seismically safer. Firefighters are housed on the second floor. The first floor, with 1,025 square feet, was designated for "fire district functions," including a large office suite for the district manager, administrative assistant, emergency preparedness coordinator, and a large meeting room.

Meanwhile, in 2021-22, the Kensington Police Department (KPD) was removed from the PSB with plans to dedicate this expensive first floor space to district personnel.

Fast forward to August 2024: The fire board approved a two-year contract to hire a new manager. The contract requires a presence of one five-hour work day per week in Kensington. That requirement can be met two weeks of the month at public meetings at the Community Center in the late afternoon and evening.

With this two-year contract, the first-floor office space allocated for the manager will likely stand vacant most of the time.

The current Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) emergency preparedness coordinator has no contractual requirement to be present in the PSB. The recent administrative assistants have worked remotely. Those offices too will likely stand vacant the vast majority of the time.

Meanwhile, Kensington police, who work daily in Kensington, 24/7, are located in a portable in El Cerrito. It is unclear when KPD will return to permanent housing in Kensington. The fire board and the police board, together, should consider using a substantial portion of the new first floor space in the PSB to house a substation for our police officers during their duty shifts. A substation might be as simple as two or three offices and some storage, which would make it easier for the officers on duty to meet with the public and store local records at the building, e.g., for the vacation key program.

Folks, it's time to think creatively to effectively utilize the newly renovated first floor in the PSB and bring our police back to Kensington, one step at a time.

Julie Stein, KFPD board director

Citizen Forum's Flawed Analysis

Dear Editor,

Last month's Citizen Forum editorial discussing the makeup of the board and how elections work in a consolidated or reorganized district contained several significant factual errors. First, the author claimed that it would not be possible for a combined board to include the entire Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) board; this is not the case. Lou Ann Teixeira, Executive Officer of Contra Costa County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) has indicated that, should the KFPD and Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPCSD) submit a proposal to combine into one district, the board can be expanded to 11 members and thus accommodate all ten current directors. The combined ten-member board can appoint an eleventh member through the normal board vacancy process. Second, the author stated that it is LAFCO who determines how many and which KFPD directors are chosen; this is also incorrect. Teixeira has indicated that LAFCO is required to accept the boards' proposal to merge, including the initial makeup of the combined board and the post-merger election sequence, as long as the proposal complies with the law.

With respect to elections, the situation is much simpler than the editorial described. Currently, every two years, Kensington elects either two or three members to each board. A combined district of eleven directors must eventually get back down to five as directors' terms expire. One reasonable and permissible approach (according to Teixeira) is to continue alternately electing three members and two members. If, for example, the districts were to combine before the 2026 election, six current directors' (and any eleventh-seat appointee's) terms would be expiring, and the 2026 election would be for three seats, reducing the board membership overall from eleven to seven, a permissible, post-merger size. Then, at the 2028 election, the four other current directors' terms would expire, and two seats would be up for election. Thus, after that election, the combined board would have five members, as required by law. At all times, the board would be made up of either equal numbers of current KFPD and KPPCSD directors or directors specifically elected/appointed to the combined district.

Daniel Levine, President, KFPD, David Spath, President, KPPCSD

Coordinated Approach Sought

Dear Editor,

Consolidation of our two boards, and their associated staff, is something Kensington residents have been seeking for years. It would mean significantly less overhead for our small community, and a coordinated approach to fire, police, and town management in general. It doesn't make sense a community of a few thousand people have duplicate boards, general managers and support staff. A big thank-you to the board members working so hard to make this happen.
Meryl Rafferty

Opportunity to Rally Together

Dear Editor,

It was an honor to represent Kensington Democrats at this year's Democratic National Convention. I've been to multiple conventions, and I have never seen the unity, excitement, and commitment to victory as high as it was in Chicago this year.

Since returning, more people have asked me how to get involved. My answer is simple: join the Kensington Democratic Club. We are organizing postcard campaigns, texting into swing districts, dropping ballot cards in Kensington, and doing everything possible to get people out to vote. We must convert this fantastic energy into wins from the top to the bottom of the ticket.

With neither of our special district boards having contested elections this year, we have a unique opportunity to rally together. Please visit www.kensingtondemocraticclub.org/ or email me at kdelaney@maderagroup.net for more information.

Kath Delaney, President, Kensington Democratic Club

Picnic

...from Front Page

Vicky Brodt. Thanks to our sponsors Mechanics Bank and Red Oak Realty.

This all-ages, free event is presented at the Kensington Community Center, 59 Arlington Avenue by the Kensington Community Council, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to providing enrichment programs such as KASEP, summer camps, and adult classes, currently including cardio dance fitness, yoga, Tai Chi, cooking and more. See details at kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org

Full Agenda at KPOA/KIC Annual Town Hall Meeting

By Rob Firmin, KPOA president, and Linda Lipscomb, KIC president

The Kensington Property Owners (KPOA) and the Kensington Improvement Club (KIC) will hold an unusually thorough Annual Town Hall and membership meeting, in person at the Community Center and online by Zoom. A roster of experts will speak on especially important timely issues affecting all Kensingtonians: district unification/consolidation; district governance updates; home insurance cancellations/options, home-hardening against wildfire; among other topics. The meeting is one day before the KCC Fall Picnic, on Saturday, October 19, from 10am-noon.

It's not surprising to find that some citizens are unaware Kensington is governed by two separate district boards. Both districts provide services to the same residential properties in Kensington yet have separate administrations and directors. Ridgeline Municipal Strategies has been retained to work with both boards to provide an independent assessment of the financial feasibility of unifying the two governing districts with a single board. Principal consultant Dmitri Semenov will report on fiscal projections for both districts, and if his analysis is completed will also summarize Ridgeline's unification/consolidation findings.

David Aranda, interim general manager of the Kensington Police Protection Community Service District, and Mary Morris-Mayorga, general manager of the Kensington Fire Protection District, will present updates and next steps for district unification/consolidation.

Leah Jacobs Nishi of Farmers Insurance will discuss home insurance cancellations and the California Fair Plan provider of last resort.

Kensington Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Johnny Valenzuela will provide an overview of the National Firewise Communities certification program and application that requires homeowners to harden their properties against wildfire damage. This program is now being considered a factor by some insurers. Kensington residents Alan Siegel and Kay Blonz will explain the process from the perspective of their experiences in establishing Kensington's first two Firewise communities.

Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia will speak on relevant county activities and issues including proposed changes to the tree-view obstruction ordinance and Kensington path funding. And parents especially may be interested in a brief update on our community library by library manager Jenny Rockwell.

All Kensington residents are invited to the Town Hall meeting! Doors open at 9:30, so come early for coffee, tea and treats. We hope to see you there! Check www.KPOA.net for the Zoom link to the meeting if you do not attend in person.



The FKL hosted a 50th birthday celebration for the Kensington Library on November 14, 2015. Gretchen Gillfillan was honored for helping found the Kensington Library and her many years of service. Pictured: Melanie McCallum, John Gioia, Nancy Okasaki, Larry Sullivan, Gretchen Gillfillan, Erin Makarczyk. Photo by Jim Fisher.

Fall Book Sale October 20

By Jim Fisher

The Friends of the Kensington Library (FKL) will hold its annual Fall Book Sale on Sunday, October 20 from 10am-4pm in the employee parking lot behind the library at 61 Arlington Avenue, in collaboration with the Kensington Community Council (KCC) Fall Picnic. The book sale has been a Kensington tradition since 1973, with all funds raised going to support the Kensington Library, underwriting new book purchases and popular library programs for children and adults.

This fall, the sale will feature a rich and colorful selection of children's picture books from one of the FKL's founding members, Gretchen Gillfillan, who died peacefully at home on June 15 at 92 years of age. A passionate educator who primarily taught 4th grade but also taught a 4/5 combo, she taught in Oxnard, San Diego, Walnut Creek, a couple schools in the East Bay, Orinda, and on Guam.

"A key passion in her life, from a very early age, was her love of reading," writes daughter Gayle. "She imbued this love of books in so many of her students as well as in me. The 'kids' in Mom's first class are now 82 years old."

Gretchen was a key figure in the history of not just the library, but the community of Kensington. In 1959, the Kensington Library was housed in the basement of the Arlington Community Church. That year, Gretchen and a small handful of library advocates organized the Friends of the Kensington Library as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Once incorporated, the FKL spearheaded the drive to establish a Kensington County Library Service Area. Approved in 1960, the new service area led to the opening of our current Kensington Library building in 1965.

Gretchen's vision for a community library extended to other art forms. She curated a rotating exhibit of local artwork on the back wall of the library, on which now hangs a certificate of gratitude from Contra Costa County, presented at the library's 50th anniversary by her friend Supervisor John Gioia. The Gretchen Gillfillan Wall continues to display rotating shows from local artists and quilters, with shows booked through February of 2025.

Be a part of the library enrichment by donating books for the sale, either by dropping off books in the donation bin during library open hours, or bringing larger donations (more than 1 bag or box) directly to the bookshed behind the library Tuesdays 11am-1pm.

And on Sunday, October 20, drop by the sale to buy books for your family, a gift for a friend, or the book you always wanted to read. Meet your neighbors and the FKL volunteers who coordinate these twice-yearly sales and the more than forty volunteers who donate their time on the day of the sale. Gretchen will be missed, and the FKL will continue the work she began in 1959 in support of the library and our community.

Second Chances Take a Turn for the Sweet

By Linnea Due

Sara Jaffe always loved cooking and baking. And she also loved design. She says that while she was attending architectural school, “I taught cooking and did catering. It’s always been a part of my life. But during school, I made a decision to go into design work and not the cooking world.”

The great thing about aging is that if you’re lucky, one has the opportunity to revisit those early decisions. Last January, Jaffe considered starting a home baking business. Friends had suggested it in the past, but she hadn’t thought seriously about it until then. “Once I decided to do it, I plunged right in,” she said. The process has been surprisingly joyful and challenging at the same time, and not in the ways that she might have expected.

Jaffe posts a selection of desserts on her website (sarajaffebakes.com) and takes orders online. She bakes and packages the desserts, which are picked up at her house. “I wanted my website to be approachable and enticing. I wanted it to be a bit playful.” What she hadn’t wanted was to spend time working out glitches on the site. Still, she says, the business is going at the right pace for her to handle it.

Jaffe’s offerings are eclectic. “Even though some of the desserts are things I’ve made over the years, I still am learning how to move through a day and be efficient,” she said. “And I’m learning to be consistent. I did a lot of testing before I was ready to launch.”

Because Jaffe does not have a commercial kitchen, she can’t offer some desserts. “I can’t do custards. I can’t do whipped cream. I’ve been working with butter cream instead. And I’m finding alternatives for certain products to get good flavor. I can’t make a dessert with fresh fruit on top—it has to be cooked. As I’m developing a new product, I’m always thinking what’s going to make it beautiful, what’s going to make it taste good, how to make it unique.”

And now that she’s operating a business and not just entertaining friends, she has to consider costs and time. “I have to schedule what things should be baked in what order. There’s a workflow. Also I went through a lot of packaging decisions. Certain things I made in the past like small loaves are not cost-effective. I realized, no, I can’t make small loaves unless I was baking them all day. And certain cakes are very rich and will feed quite a few people, while simpler cakes are still very popular. I began thinking about what are the ones you want to have with a cup of coffee.”

Current offerings are hand pies, a decadent triple espresso cake, a sumptuous layered coconut lime cake, fruit galettes, butter cookies, poppy seed cake and more. Desserts, in other words, from the simple to the sublime.

She is now considering what to offer for the holidays. “I’ll develop more cookies,” she mused. “And I’m thinking about a pumpkin chocolate cake, a date nut cake. And some desserts that will appeal to people who can’t have flour.” Her biggest seller so far are chocolate biscotti. “They started out a different flavor,” she said. “I may go back to some other flavors. And the galette has been well received.”

Jaffe emphasized that her business is solely pre-order by phone (510-528-4412) or through the website. “It is a learning experience as are most new things,” she said. “Much of the learning experience is the business level and website. And seeing what works and how do I build it so

I can take on more. It’s a lot of work, but I love it. I’m situated in a great location. Kensington is a good spot.”



KENSINGTON K-9s

Read to a Dog at the Kensington Library
By Winston Churchill, Bulldog

I met Nicolet, a ten-year-old Golden Retriever, in the Kensington Library. She exuded calm as a nine-year-old in fourth grade read Nicolet a story about a dragon. The girl read the entire book as Nicolet watched, listened, and provided gentle encouragement.

Nicolet is part of the library’s recently relaunched Read to a Dog program. Library manager Jenny Rockwell explained that petting and interacting with gentle, friendly dogs has a positive effect on people, young and old alike. For young readers, a calm, reassuring listener creates a safe, non-judgmental environment to improve their oral fluency. And spending time with a sweet dog is just plain fun. The Read to a Dog program is intended to help build a child’s self-esteem, confidence, and reading enjoyment.

The library partners with the nonprofit volunteer organization, Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD). ATD provides testing, certification, registration, support, and insurance for members who volunteer with their dogs in animal-assisted activities. Nicolet’s mom and therapy dog handler, Heidi Sanders, ensures the children and dogs are comfortable, safe, and having fun.

Sanders has been bringing therapy dogs to volunteer events for 15 years. Nicolet is her fourth therapy dog and has been volunteering with ATD for five years. Nicolet was retired from the Guide Dogs for the Blind breeding program and now thrives as a therapy dog. She is exceptionally calm and loves all people, especially children.

Sanders also has a fifth therapy dog, Pandora, a six year-old Golden Retriever and Labrador Retriever cross. Pandora trained as a service dog with Guide Dogs for the Blind before undergoing a career change to become a therapy dog for the past year and a half. Sanders, Nicolet, and Pandora have volunteered at local libraries, senior centers, and schools, including Kensington Hilltop Elementary.

Sanders loves seeing children reading to Nicolet and Pandora and notices how their reading aptitude and confidence grow. Nicolet and Pandora also volunteer with ATD colleagues that include a Welsh Corgi, a Chihuahua, a Bernedoodle, and a tiny mixed breed named Pixie. Some are playful, engaging goofballs, others are calm and quietly encouraging. Like the array of books at the library, there is a therapy dog that can connect with and inspire each young reader.

Rockwell enjoys seeing the children animatedly reading, turning the books around to point out the pictures to their canine listeners, and smiling with pride as they see the dogs enjoying their storytelling. She has observed how the patience and comfort provided by therapy dogs can gradually transform shy, reluctant readers to voracious bookworms and self-assured speakers.

The Read to a Dog program is designed for young folks who can read on their but could benefit from the patience and encouragement of a canine companion. Read to a Dog events are scheduled twice a month. Readers are encouraged to sign up for a 15-minute session with a therapy dog by calling (510) 524-3043 or visiting the Kensington Library.



Scavenger Hunt, Animal Show, Costume Parade, Giant Pumpkin Headline the Grand Halloween Extravaganza at Colusa Circle

By Karen Yencich

It’s time to get your Halloween costume sorted out, because the annual Colusa Circle Halloween Harvest Celebration, set for Sunday, October 27, is coming up fast.

The party starts at 9am, when the Kensington Farmers’ Market opens with free pumpkins for the kiddies. The market’s annual Hay Bale Corral also returns with appearances by Skeleton Man and Scarecrow—perfect for clambering and selfies. And the “Giant Pumpkin”—once again summoned by Colusa Market—will defy visitors to guess its weight.

At 10, kids can start picking up Scavenger Hunt maps at Zip Code East Bay and collecting stamps from participating Colusa Circle merchants, then trading in the completed cards for soft-serve ice cream at Benchmark Pizzeria. The perennially popular Obstacle Course for Kids hosted by The Fuse Fitness studio also opens at 10. And the Halloween Portrait Booth will be back again this year in the Pocket Park between the Benchmark Portavia Sandwich Shop and Zip Code East Bay. These fun events go through 1pm.

Kids should start to gather at 10:15 for the Costume Parade at the Colusa Circle entrance to the Kensington Farmers’ Market, where they can also pick up a number if they’d like to participate in the annual Costume Contest. The parade will begin at 10:30. Afterward, Costume Contest winners will be announced at the Bandstand at 11, where prizes will be awarded. The popular Animal Show, sponsored by the Colusa Circle Merchants Association (CCMA), begins at 11:30, in The Fuse Garage parking lot.

The Halloween Harvest Celebration has come a long way from the initial Kensington Farmers’ Market parade with a couple of standard poodles in costume to more than 200 neighborhood kids who proudly strut their stuff as Thomas the Tank Engine, princesses, food products, and strange beings from another planet. Benchmark Pizzeria’s generous provision of ice cream at the end of the Scavenger Hunt draws in plenty of supporters. The Fuse Fitness Studio’s wildly popular Obstacle Course, the Animal Show, (initially brought in by Beth Phiminster at Kensington Vet and now supported by CCMA) as well as the Colusa Market’s Giant Pumpkin, have locked in the celebration’s status as a permanent event that not only builds community, but celebrates it.

“It takes a village to raise a child,” as the saying goes. A village is also a place to know one another, and to be known, and a place to support each other in all stages of life. Community is built not only by the people who envision these events, but also by the people who come to enjoy them. Our village is Kensington. Thanks everyone, see you on October 27.

Learn How to Compost

By Maureen Parkes

A free Virtual Home Composting Workshop will be offered on October 12 from 10am-noon. Practically anyone can learn to compost or improve their existing compost techniques by following some basic steps taught in the workshop. Free instructional materials on home composting will be provided via email and upon request.

The instructor, Todd Sutton, an expert with more than 30 years in the environmental field, has appeared on national television including Discovery and History channels, and has educated thousands on waste prevention, reuse, recycling, and composting.

Food waste disposal is a national problem. Food waste is the largest discarded material category, accounting for 14.1 percent of the municipal waste stream at 34.3 million tons per year. Food waste sent to a landfill is buried and decomposes in the absence of oxygen, which produces methane, a significant greenhouse gas. Methane is 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

Composting your yard trimmings and food scraps is easy, adds nutrients to your yard and garden, kind to our environment and good for you too! Save money, save water, and conserve natural resources. If done correctly, a compost pile can produce finished compost within three months which can be used as a soil booster.

All Contra Costa County residents are welcome. This event will be hosted live online via Zoom. Participants will be emailed the Zoom link once they are registered. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/free-virtual-backyard-composting-workshop-tickets-841142238077?aff=tdcreator>

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Garden Party favorite, LeJazu Band, rocked the event last year. Photo by Charlee Martin.

Garden Party Hits Forty

By Katie Brohawn

Get ready to sparkle! The Kensington Education Foundation is rolling out the red carpet—ruby red, that is—for the 40th annual Garden Party on November 4 at the iconic Rockefeller Lodge in San Pablo. This year we’re celebrating four decades of fun, friendship, and fundraising, all wrapped in the glow of our Ruby Anniversary!

Picture this: an evening under twinkling lights in a magical garden, sipping on craft cocktails, and feasting on delectable bites while mingling with friends, neighbors, and fellow supporters. From exclusive getaways and rare finds to artwork by our very own talented young artists, our auction is packed with treasures you won’t want to miss!

But this isn’t just another party—it’s the party. The Garden Party has been a community favorite for 40 years, raising over 30 percent of the funds needed to fuel the essential programs that state and local budgets just don’t cover.

Your support powers Art, Library, STEM, Science Lab, Reading & Math Support, PE, Playworks recess support, and more—giving our students the ultimate toolkit for success.

And we’re not just celebrating 40 years; we’re celebrating you, our incredible community, for making it all possible. Grab your tickets now at khsparentgroups.org/garden-party and be part of a night that’s been 40 years in the making.

Plus, we’re on the hunt for fabulous auction donations—think gift cards, vacation rentals, fine wine, and all the good stuff. Our online auction begins on October 23. Got something to give? Send an email to KatieBrohawn@gardentparty@kensingtongeducationfoundation.org

A special thank you to our early sponsors: Josh Dickinson from Zip Code East Bay, Abbey Pet Hospital, and Campbell Green LLP. Interested in becoming a sponsor and making an impact on our community? Reach out to the KEF email address above for information.

Join us as we celebrate 40 years of dedication, community spirit, and educational excellence. Together, we can continue to provide our children with the resources they need to thrive!

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TK-8 SCHOOL

Altar Crafts, Storytime, Marionettes at the Library

By Jenny Rockwell

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

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

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

Tuesdays, October 1 and 15, Read to a Dog Join us and a licensed therapy dog for a 15-minute reading session every first and third Tuesday afternoon, 3-4pm. Sign ups begin, in person, at 2:45pm.

Sat, October 5, 2-4pm Dia de los Muertos Ofrenda (altar) crafts Come create crafts for your own Dia de los Muertos ofrenda (altar). Paint a picture frame and glue tissue paper to a votive. The library will provide supplies and decorations.

Tuesdays, October 8, 15, 22 6pm Paying for College with Scholarship Series Over three sessions, Rebecca Lippman will walk you through the steps to identify, apply for, and manage college scholarships, as well as write an effective college essay. There's plenty of space, but registration is required.

Wed, October 16, 2:30-5:30pm Cloth Produce Bag Sewing Circle Join the Kensington Seamstresses 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.

Sat, October 19, 11:15-12pm Math Club Are you in grades 3-6? Perfect! Math Club is for you. Covers a math topic using fun puzzles and activities.

Mon, October 28, 6:30-8pm Kensington Library Book Club The club meets online via Zoom, usually on the fourth Monday of each month. The selection for October is *Germinal* by Emile Zola.

Tues, October 29, 6:30pm Fratello Marionettes Halloween Spooktacular The Fratello Marionettes Halloween Spooktacular features happy ghosts, Frankenstein, the Purple People Eater, a not-so-scary spider and more. Special care is taken to make this production a kid-friendly experience.

October Art Exhibit: Watercolors by Kate Weese Come visit the library to see the current art exhibit of watercolors by Kensington resident Kate Weese: kateweese.com

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

The deadline to register to vote by mail is October 21. Then deposit your ballot outside the library in the official ballot drop box.



KIDS COLORING CONTEST

All Submissions due to the Kensington Branch by Friday Oct. 18th before the Picnic.

Winners will be contacted for prize. Please list: name, age, and phone number on the back of your submission.

Proud to support the Annual Kensington Community Picnic!

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Fall Plant Sale

By Anna Frankfurt

Fall is the time to plant, especially California native plants. The El Cerrito Garden Club is holding a fall plant sale, Sunday October 6 from 10am-3pm, at the El Cerrito Library parking lot. There will be cool season edibles, native plants as well as pollinator and blooming plants, and succulents, including the cute "pumpculents" (succulent topped mini pumpkins). These make wonderful fall living centerpieces, and when the pumpkins are no longer viable, the succulents can be transplanted to your garden or pots. All plants are propagated by club members so will grow around here. Members at the sale will be happy to talk to you about the plants and provide care instructions. 6510 Stockton Ave, El Cerrito. Plentiful parking is available! Cash or check only, exact change and small bills much appreciated! See you there!

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Kensington Community Education

KASEP



There's truly something for everyone at KASEP, whether your child enjoys athletics, culinary arts, or hands-on crafting. With our passionate instructors and a wide variety of courses, we provide a safe and engaging space for kids to learn and grow after school.

Important Dates- mark your calendars

- September 21st KCC Movie Night in the Kensington Park
- October 14th Indigenous Peoples Activity w/ Good Guest Kensington
- October 20th KCC Picnic at the Kensington Community Center
- December 3rd Winter KASEP Registration



Indigenous People's Day Event for Kids, organized by Good Guest Kensington in partnership with The Watershed Project & KCC. This event for kids ages ~8-12 and their adults will be followed by an optional picnic at the park.
October 14th from 10:30-12 at the KCC Recreation Building.
Please RSVP through goodguestkensington.org by October 6.

The Kensington After School Enrichment Program (KASEP) is excited to announce the start of its Fall session, offering a wide range of exciting and educational classes for students in TK through 6th grade. This year, students have the opportunity to explore their creativity, develop new skills, and stay active in a fun and supportive environment.

Some of our most popular classes include Chocolate Creations, where young chefs can dive into the art of crafting delicious sweets, and Muffin Madness, where baking meets creativity. For those interested in more savory skills, Creating Family Meals teaches children how to prepare simple yet tasty dishes for their families.

For students looking to explore the arts, our Improv class encourages quick thinking and creativity, while Learning to Crochet offers a relaxing and skill-building introduction to working with yarn. On the sports side, we offer a wide range of options, including Judo, Soccer, Gymnastics, Flag Football, and Ultimate Frisbee, ensuring there's something to spark every interest.



Fall Schedule for Adult and Family Classes

April Schlanger Fall Cooking Series starts back up Sept. 10th
Join KASEP Teacher April Schlanger for weekly hands on workshops. Cooking and Baking with fruits, veggies & herbs. Learn how to add more produce to your meals. Waste less and eat more seasonally.

Tuesdays this fall 6:00-8:00pm
Community Center Kitchen
\$45 per class
Menus will be posted on our Instagram the week prior to each class.



BLOCKPRINT+STITCH ART with Elaine Chu
Saturday, October 26th, 1:00-3:00pm
\$70/person includes all materials For adults/teens

Create a beautiful framed piece of art with an embroidery hoop. Design a handcarved blockprint, using a clever transfer technique,

Print with a variety of fabric ink colors and add hand-stitched accents. Makes a lovely gift or keepsake. After learning this technique, you will have the knowledge to create more designs and fabric applications on your own!

Elaine G. Chu, local Kensington resident has taught handcrafts to students of all ages.

Her work has been published in "Greencraft" and "Somerset Studio" magazines as well as "1000 Artists' Books." She co-authored "Wood Paper Scissors," a how-to crafts book.

Cardio Dance with Karma Smart
Fridays 11:30am-12:30
Community Center
Cost \$15 drop in or register online

Yoga with Anja Borgstrom
Strength & Balance Yoga -Tuesdays at 8:30am
Gentle Yoga - Thursdays at 11:30
Cost is \$20 drop in or register online


Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi
Wednesdays & Fridays from 9:30-11:00am
Drop-in fee is \$15

Register at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/adult-and-family-classes
Keep checking our website for updated adult class schedules.

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.





KENSINGTON EATS OUT

Kensington Eats at Dolly's
By Ittai Shiu



Is there such a thing as too much cheese? A common debate in our household revolves around this very question, particularly when it comes to the amount of parmesan sprinkled on a plate of pasta. A visit to Italy a few years back truly opened our eyes (and palates) to what a huge difference high-quality cheese could make. Since then, we've concluded, in our opinion, that there truly is no such thing as too much cheese—especially when it comes to amazing Parmesan.



Some of the area's culinary gems are hidden in plain sight. As we settle into fall, we turn our attention once again to the Peppermint Tree Plaza in El Cerrito on San Pablo Avenue. A large sign advertising "Cheese Wheel Pasta" drew us into Dolly's, an Italian eatery with a unique blend of modern and vintage charm.

Dulanthi "Dolly" Batathota moved to El Cerrito from Sri Lanka in 2009 and, inspired by her Italian aunt, developed a deep connection with Italian flavors and experiences. Before opening her own restaurant, she honed her skills at the renowned Milano's Restaurant in Tiburon, where she

eventually became manager before its closure during the pandemic. Though unfortunate, the closure led Batathota to discover a vacant lot on San Pablo Avenue, which she transformed into the restaurant she had always dreamed of creating.

Dolly's offers a quintessential Italian menu, emphasizing simplicity and quality ingredients, and to create a unique menu that would stand out and captivate her customers she introduced the legendary cheese wheel pasta! Fresh, al dente pasta is transferred directly from boiling water to the middle of a huge wheel imported from Parma to be tossed where it mixes and melts with the Parmesan.

This spectacle is irresistible to capture for social media which makes the seats at the marble counter the best in the house. Whether served 'plain' or with salmon or prosciutto, watching the final dish being assembled just moments before it's served to you is a tantalizing test of restraint.

Complementing the pasta is a diverse selection of wines and beers, along with a range of fresh salads—I'm particularly fond of the Beet Salad tossed in their house-made

dressing—and sides like their flavorful meatballs, creating the perfect date night meal.

To elevate the experience, Dolly imports desserts from Milan every week. After tasting the tiramisu, we knew it were experiencing something special, leaving us eager to return and try the Mango Panna Cotta or the Coppa Mascarpone.

The cozy and intimate setting makes it easy to chat with Dolly and her husband, Shenal Dias, whose passion and resilience shine through. This month, they'll be celebrating their hard work and dedication.

Mark your calendars for Dolly's first-anniversary celebration on Saturday and Sunday, October 26–27 from 12:00-6:00 pm. This free event will feature live music, a DJ, Italian food, Emiliano's Tacos Truck and a cheese-cutting competition!

What you'd expect to find in a trendy metro area like London or New York, Dolly has brought to El Cerrito through hard work, resilience, and a commitment to community. Let's celebrate with her!

Dolly's
10172 San Pablo Ave, El Cerrito, CA 94530
510-609-7123

Blessing

...From Front Page

something about their pet. After all the pets are introduced, Rev. Jen Chapman, pastor of Arlington Community Church, will offer a communal blessing. Those who would like an individual blessing of their pet (including those who can't bring their pet but would like to bring a photo or item that belongs to the pet to be blessed), will have an opportunity to do that as well.

To add to the Halloween-themed fun, we'll have a paw print pumpkin-painting activity. Bring your own pumpkin, or get one there for a small donation (just to cover the cost). Volunteers from Arlington Community Church will help you decorate a pumpkin with your pet's paw prints!

All animals are welcome! Please keep pets on a leash or in a carrier. And if your pet has a costume, we would love to see it!



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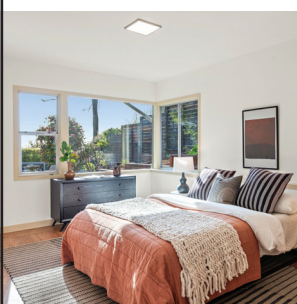


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FALL UPDATE FROM ZIP CODE EAST BAY

This season, we're excited to continue helping our neighbors find the perfect place to call home, whether it's their first or a new chapter. The market is evolving, and we're here to guide you through every step with the same dedication and local expertise you've come to trust.

-Josh Dickinson & the ZCEB Team

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