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Bringing the Community Together

KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

SEPTEMBER 2023

PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 7

Hot Dogs, Popcorn, and Mr. Dewie's Cashew Creamery Make Hay at KCC's Family Movie Night in the Park



Mechanics Bank, for helping us to bring back Movie Night in Kensington Park. If you'd like to volunteer at this event, please call the KCC office at 525-0292. See you at the movies!



Photos by Jenny Parks

By Sylvia Elsbury

Disney's *Encanto* will be shown at KCC's Family Movie Night in Kensington Park on Saturday, September 23. "After a hiatus of five long years, we are delighted to bring back Movie Night, a fun community gathering for all ages," says longtime KCC board member and former president Anne Forrest, who has hosted many Movie Nights with help from other volunteers.

Admission is free to this outdoor event, where moviegoers are strongly encouraged to bring beach chairs and blankets for everyone's comfort in the cool night air. The movie will be shown on the lawn outside the Recreation Building. You are invited to bring your own picnic or buy your dinner and treats from KCC. The show starts at 7:30pm (dusk), but KCC will set up at 6:30pm, selling hot dog and sausage dinners, popcorn, movie candy, and beverages both hot and cold. Premium non-dairy ice creams from our newest event sponsor, Mr. Dewie's Cashew Creamery, will also be available for purchase...YUM!

Encanto is a magical film about a Colombian mountain family, the Madrigals, with gorgeous animation and lots of laughs. Songs by Lin-Manuel Miranda are featured on the chart-topping soundtrack. All of us at KCC thank Mr. Dewie's and our longtime sponsor,



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Kensington and Beyond Update

AUGUST 2023



1221 King Drive
SOLD | El Cerrito Hills
7 BD | 5 BA
Listing Price: \$2,499,000
Selling Price: \$3,025,000

Selling your home? Check your feelings at the door.

Selling your home can be a very emotional decision because this is where many milestones in your life have occurred. Perhaps it was your very first home, or the first home you bought with your significant other. And if you've lovingly and painstakingly made renovations and upgrades, the home may hold even more significance. However, when you decide to put your home on the market, it's best to keep your feelings in check.

Understandably, you may have emotional attachment to the property you've called home for the last few years. However, allowing your personal feelings about your home to interfere with negotiations or decision-making can result in unfavorable outcomes or lost opportunities. It may be difficult, you must separate your emotions from the process so you can be as objective as possible. Focus on the financial aspects and remind yourself that selling your home is a business transaction and you are trying to get the most favorable end outcome for yourself.

As your agent I take an objective look at your home, recommend what improvements that will give you the highest return, collect estimates and create a plan and budget to prepare your home to sell. I remove the stress and manage the process to get you prepared to sell your home. I expertly market your home, review offers with you and negotiate on your behalf to get you the highest and best result. Condo or Castle I treat each home as the most important property I represent.

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.

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BAKING WITH PRIDE SINCE 1984



Library patron Margot turns in the very first completed summer reading passport of the year to Miss Mary. Photo by Thomas Alexander. See more library news on page 10.

Storytimes and Book Club Take Stage at Library

By Thomas Alexander

Take advantage of the free programs offered by the Kensington Library at 61 Arlington Avenue. Call 510-524-3043 with questions or for details.

The library would like to thank everyone who participated in our Summer Reading Challenge this year. The Kensington branch had 170 kids, teens, and adults track their reading and turn in completed passports. Well done, Kensington!

September events:

- September 1, 8, 15, 22, & 29 Baby and Toddler Storytime.** Fun stories, songs, action rhymes, shaky eggs, and more! Great for increasing early literacy skills and making friends. Two identical sessions. 10am & 11am.
- September 5, 12, 19, & 26 Family Storytime.** Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome. 6:30pm.
- September 18 Kensington Library Book Club.** This month's selection for discussion is *Our Missing Hearts* by Celeste Ng. Online. Contact the library to join. 6:30pm.

Kensington Market Update

June 2023 to August 2023

2 NEW LISTINGS

Median List Price
\$1,495,000

Median Sq. Ft.
1693

0 PENDING SALES

Median List Price
n/a

Median Sq. Ft.
n/a

10 CLOSED SALES

Median List Price
\$1,075,000

Median Sales Price
\$1,392,000

Median Sq. Ft.
1398

Detached Single Family Homes

COMPASS

No Inventory!

That is correct. Across the East Bay the number of home sales are at an all time low. In Kensington, inventory is almost 50% less than last year during the same time frame. It is definitely a seller's market. It is simply due to basic economics, high demand and low inventory. The result is rising prices. Even though the Fed's raised the prime rate, real estate loan rates have remained constant, or even come down. (Under 7%)

Although rising rates have impacted some buyers by reducing purchasing power, the Bay Area has maintained its value, and when a home is priced right, receive multiple offers. Currently, housing inventory continues to drop by double-digits in terms of both new inventory hitting the MLS, as well as total homes available for sale at any given time. This, more so than higher interest rates, is the limiting factor preventing a more robust recovery in home sales.

Our fall market is already beginning and in my experience it is one of the best times to sell your home. It is typically sunny weather in the fall, and you want clear days when you are being marketed. Take advantage of this excellent seller's market and the great weather!



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.

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TIPS FOR LITHIUM-ION BATTERY SAFETY

Lithium-ion batteries supply power to many devices we use daily. Our phones, laptops, and many cars are powered by lithium-ion batteries, which, if defective, can overheat, catch fire, or explode. Be aware of the danger and prevent a home fire. Watch for signs of a problem: stop using the battery if you notice an odor, change in color, too much heat, change in shape, leaking, or odd noises from your devices. Avoid charging a device under your pillow. Avoid charging the device or device battery after it is fully charged. Keep batteries at room temperature when possible. Store batteries away from anything that can catch fire. For more information, visit www.kensingtonfire.org/prepare.

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.

OCTOBER 2023 DEADLINES

Advertising Deadline ❖ Sept. 8

Editorial Deadline ❖ Sept. 10

K E N S I N G T O N
OUTLOOK

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SEPTEMBER 2023

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

Page 3

Letters to the Editor

Smart Solutions and Common Sense

Dear Editor:

I am happy to see the new members on the fire and police boards. They did very well in their campaign to bring new ideas for our small community. Now they must get down to reality and work hard on our many problems. The average citizen here is just assuming that it will all work out. After living here since 1959, I have always had a keen interest in our community. Please hear me out as to my take on our situation regarding our building on the Arlington.

Both the police and fire persons should stay in the building. The present plans can be altered to fit them both there, and they will be happy once they see it. Let's provide another fine and elegant place outside of the building for the administration work. That will help with the space planning. I know there are many newer earthquake and building codes required now and that makes it more difficult. We have very smart people working on all this and so we expect smart solutions.

Think of the relief knowing that the boards really can tackle other issues and stop wringing their hands about where to put the police, our precious protectors. Please put them where they are centrally located to deal with all that can happen. Especially now.

Lastly, let's think about the cost. The remodel is costing about \$9 million. Finding, designing, and financing another building could cost as much and more. Are the people ready to take on that tax burden? They are not aware at all about any of this. Just ask them. We are a small community, probably the richest per square foot of anywhere in the world as far as brains and famous scientists like Oppenheimer go, but we must also remember about common sense.

Lorraine Osmundson

The Ugly Truth

Dear Editor:

We read with dismay your informative June article describing the police board's how-to-get-to-say-no approach to the prospect of the Kensington police and firefighters continuing to jointly occupy the Public Safety Building. Good article, bad news.

With an honest effort to make it work, as it has worked for half a century up to now in our town of one square mile, there is enough space for the police on the first floor of the building and a small bit of extra space on the second floor that the firefighters do not need. We are looking at about \$1.5 million in available cash in police board funds, which is enough to seal the deal. The long-standing surplus in fire board funds is pretty much exhausted.

Any analysis not in the purely wishful thinking category would conclude that the only realistic options available for locating the police elsewhere would cost at least several million dollars the two boards do not have and cannot expect to get without coming to us taxpayers to pay the bill. There's nothing wrong with more taxes for a worthy cause, but the path the police board wants to go down would be racking up significant debt to buy an inferior location. This is the ugly truth ignored by a shallow analysis that appears engineered to deliver a pre-ordained solution.

No other location will serve the town as well. The least expensive options would have the police occupying portable boxes on stilts at impractical locations, as they are doing now far away on San Pablo Avenue in El Cerrito, yet somehow the police would lose morale occupying a newly renovated PSB, the most strategic location for them to serve this community well and take pride in what they do.

The last election promised new, competent leadership, and we are concerned we may not be getting that from some of the newcomers welcomed by the voters. The focus should be on what we can do to get the true value out of what we have, not what we can't do unless we have more.

Len Welsh, Karl Kruger

June/July KPD Patrol Log

June

- On June 1 at about 14:12 hours, KPD was dispatched to the 100 block of Stratford Avenue on a report of a stolen catalytic converter.
- On June 4 at about 1022 hours, KPD was dispatched to the 200 block of Yale Avenue on a report of a grand theft, after the homeowner noticed their catalytic converter had been stolen while they were away on vacation.
- On June 5, KPD observed a suspicious vehicle in the parking lot of the Exxon Gas station and contacted both occupants. Both occupants had active warrants for their arrest and were arrested, and their vehicle searched. While searching the vehicle, numerous stolen items including blank check books, personal identification paperwork to other people, along with drugs and drug paraphernalia was located inside of the vehicle. The items were collected and logged into KPD evidence, before the vehicle was impounded. Both occupants were booked into the County Jail for violation of active warrants for their arrest, 496(A)-Possession of Stolen Property, PC 530.5-Identity Theft, PC 475 (B)-Possession of Blank Checks, H&S 11377-Possession of a Controlled Substance and H&S 11364(A)-Possession of Drug Paraphernalia.
 - A Suspected Child Abuse Report (SCAR) was received from Contra Costa County Child Protective Services from an earlier unreported incident. The investigation is ongoing.
 - On June 14, at about 9:50pm, several juveniles were contacted, detained, and turned over to their parents after they were seen possessing items consistent with suspected vandalism. The following morning fresh graffiti was located at the park. An investigation is ongoing.
 - On June 15 at 1105 hours, KPD was dispatched to the 100 block of Sunset Drive on a report that the homeowner's car had been stolen overnight. It was recovered two weeks later in the city of Richmond and returned to the homeowner.
 - On June 17 at 1015 hours, KPD was dispatched to an auto burglary that took place the night before in the 100 block of Ardmore Road. The initial investigation determined that approximately \$450 worth of tools had been stolen from inside of the work truck.
 - On June 17 at 2100 hours, KPD was dispatched to a parking complaint in the 100 block of Anson Way. KPD located a vehicle registered to another person in a different county, partially obstructing the roadway. Unable to locate the registered owner, the vehicle was impounded.
 - On June 25 at 0827 hours, KPD was dispatched to the 200 block of Cambridge Avenue on a report of an auto burglary. During the investigation, it was determined that

three vehicles had been burglarized in the district overnight.

- On June 28 at about 0049 hours, while on patrol a KPD officer located a vehicle near Edgercroft and Coventry roads that had its registration expired for over a year. While on scene, the officer recognized the same vehicle had been given a warning about one year earlier that it was subject to being towed if the registration wasn't paid. The vehicle was impounded.
- On June 29 at about 1300 hours, KPD conducted a traffic enforcement stop and cited the driver for various infractions and for violation of CVC 12500(a)-Unlicensed Driver.
- On June 29 at about 1024 hours, KPD was dispatched to the 300 block of Colusa Avenue on a report of a suspicious person. While circulating the area, officers spotted the individual and determined he had a \$20,000 warrant. He was arrested for the outstanding warrant.
- On June 30 at 1024 hours, KPD was dispatched to the 100 block of Highland Blvd, on a report of a missing person who was not at home but whose door was left wide open. KPD and a caregiver circulated the area and eventually located the homeowner several blocks away who was not injured or a victim of a crime.

July

- On July 7 between 3- 5pm, a catalytic converter was stolen from underneath a vehicle in the 100 block of Ardmore Road.
- On July 11 the homeowners in the 100 block of Edwin Drive left for the day; when they returned, they discovered a back window to the house had been broken and \$6,775.00 worth of personal items had been stolen from inside the residence. Evidence was collected and submitted to the Contra Costa County Crime Lab for analysis. The Investigation is ongoing.
- On July 12 at 12:10pm, KPD was dispatched to a suspicious death in the 100 block of Highland Blvd. KPD responded and conducted an in investigation. The body was turned over to the Contra Costa County Coroner's Office for cause of death.
- On July 18 a resident returned from a one-week vacation and discovered their vehicle had been stolen from the Park-N-Ride off Arlington Avenue and Ardmore Road. An investigation was conducted that included a neighborhood canvass check that resulted in the vehicle being located down the road from the Park-N-Ride.
- On July 18 at 9:13am, KPD was dispatched to the 100 block of Arlington Avenue on a report of a theft. KPD determined that all four tires had been stolen and replaced with rocks while the homeowner was away on vacation. The total estimated loss to replace the tires was \$1,700.
- On July 19 at 7:49am, KPD was dispatched to a suspicious vehicle with no plates that was parked at the corner of Colusa Avenue and Valley Road. KPD checked the VIN number with the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System and determined the vehicle had been reported stolen by Oakland PD since July 14. The stolen vehicle was returned to the owner.
- On July 19, while on scene recovering the stolen vehicle from Oakland, another vehicle was reported stolen nearby in the 300 block of Colusa Avenue. The investigation indicated the suspects likely dropped off the first stolen vehicle and possibly stole the next vehicle.
- On July 22 at about 09:40am, multiple calls were received from the residents in the 1600 block of Oak View Avenue of a suspicious person loitering and ringing doorbells. KPD responded and contacted a suspicious person rambling incoherently and initially detained the person for violation of H&S 11550-Under the influence of a controlled substance. While investigating the incident, it was discovered the person had broken into a vacant residence the night before, took a shower, slept in the bed, and destroyed some items inside the house. Stolen property linked to a burglary in Oakland was also found inside the house. The subject was then transported to the Contra Costa County Jail and assaulted staff and the arresting officer, which resulted in the KPD Officer receiving medical treatment at the Contra Costa Regional Medical Center. The subject was charged with violations of H&S 11550-Under the influence of a controlled substance; PC 496-Possession of Stolen Property; PC 1203.2-Violation of Probation and PC 243(B)-Battery on a Peace Officer.
- On July 27 at 09:19am, KPD was dispatched to a traffic collision at the corner of Arlington Avenue and Rincon Road. KPD located the street sign under the front bumper of the vehicle. The driver was also located next to the vehicle stumbling and falling into some bushes nearby. An investigation determined the driver was under the influence of drugs, while driving with two children in the vehicle. The driver was arrested for violation of CVC 23152(F)-DUI and two counts of violation of PC 273(A)-Child Endangerment. The driver was transported to the hospital for treatment, and the two unharmed children were released to the other parent who responded to the scene.



Past Kensington Police Chief Steve Simpkins famously shows up at all swearing-ins and retirement ceremonies. The July 13 retirement ceremony for his longtime friend, Brad Harms, was one he would never miss. Here Simpkins describes how he persuaded Lieutenant Harms to come to Kensington. Sue Harms, Brad's wife, records Simpkins' speech on her phone for posterity. Photo by Linnea Due.

Start Planning Now for Clean-up Week September 18-22

By David Aranda, KPPCSD interim general manager

It's that time of year again—our yearly large clean-up with Bay View Refuse! During the week of September 18-22 on your scheduled pick-up day, Bay View Refuse is making a special effort to take anything and everything, free! This includes, among other items: Normal garbage and green waste; furniture such as sofas, tables, chairs, cabinets, lamps and refrigerators; mattresses, bed frames, and box springs; electronic waste such as printers, computer accessories, televisions; hazardous waste; unused or expired medicines and prescriptions, and more!

If you are a Kensington resident and wish to participate, check your home, garage, basements, crawl spaces, and take advantage of this once-a-year free removal of all your unwanted items.

Bay View will provide more details in a flier they will be leaving each resident, but start to plan now, especially with bulky items, hazardous waste that must be disposed of along with electronic waste and other materials not normally allowed in the regular pick-up cycle.

If the items are too heavy or bulky, do not let that stop you! Please contact either Bay View at (510) 237-4614 or the KPPCSD district office at (510) 526-4141, and we will see that manpower is provided to move and remove the items!

If you have any questions or want to request help with moving your heavy items out to the curb, please call interim general manager David Aranda at (661) 300-1231. Or contact Greg Christie of Bay View Refuse at (510) 237-4614 or e-mail info@bayviewrefuse.com.

Remember, cleaning out your unused items isn't just great for keeping your home tidy, it's also important for reducing your home's fire risk. Please help us make this the most successful clean-up week yet!

KCC Seeks New Members for Board of Directors

By Sylvia Elsbury, KCC Board President

Like many local nonprofit organizations, the Kensington Community Council has an urgent and ongoing need to recruit new members to its board. As the current board president, I invite Kensington residents to consider taking on this important role. We offer opportunities for you to flex your skills in education, finance, law, writing, administration, human resources and many more areas of interest and expertise. Parenting is also good prep for a board member, since most of our programs serve families with school-age children. My professional background includes marketing and nonprofit fundraising, but I volunteered for KCC because of my wonderful experience as the parent of KASEP kids and KCC summer campers. Yet parenthood is not a prerequisite for service on KCC's board; we hope to hear from anyone in Kensington who wants to help sustain and improve the organization.

KCC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit staffed by teachers and program administrators. The volunteer board of directors provides oversight of programs and finances at meetings held ten to twelve times per year. Projects such as contract negotiation and strategic planning are in the board's purview, and subcommittees may meet separately to tackle these and others. The board also presents annual events, including the community-wide Fall Picnic (Sunday, October 22) and Family Movie Night (Saturday, September 23).

I'm proud to report that for many years, residents have told us they chose Kensington for their family's home because of KCC's programs. Kensington, an unincorporated community with no recreation department, would likely lack walk-able afterschool programs, family classes and summer camps were they not provided by KCC. KCC's board members are grateful to be trusted partners with Kensington's government and families, in service to the community. Join us! Email me with questions or thoughts at president@kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org. More information, including the email addresses of all current board members, is at kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org.



Learning from an Octopus

By Sara Laferte

Come see *My Octopus Teacher* at the Arlington Community Church's afternoon movies series. *My Octopus Teacher* is a beautiful underwater documentary made off the coast of South Africa by Craig Foster, a South African naturalist and environmental filmmaker. The cinematography is spellbinding and earned a number of awards, including the Critics' Choice Award for Best Cinematography.

In 2018 Foster was taking a break after filming a demanding documentary in the Kalahari desert. As personal therapy, he committed to going diving every day for a year off the coast of South Africa, during which he developed a relationship with an octopus. The trust the octopus granted to Foster allowed him to observe and film her life story, documenting her activities, rationality, and ingenuity. Admission is free; please come on time. Wednesday, September 6, 1:30pm, 52 Arlington Avenue. For questions, call the church office at 510-526-9146.



Kensington Author Examines Medical Ethics in Novel Too Close for Comfort

By Linnea Due

When Akemi Brodsky was growing up in Kensington, she never thought about being a writer. "I studied geo-chemistry in college," said Brodsky, who attended Brown University. "As an undergrad, I worked in a lab. I really enjoyed science and working in a lab, but I saw how the lifestyle was crazy for postdocs."

The demands of that lifestyle figure large in Brodsky's debut novel, *The Brill Pill*, which came out in mid-August. The novel centers on two scientists, one at Harvard, one at Yale, working on regenerating organs and tissue, including brain tissue. The two competitors find themselves in similar ethical quandaries. Who wouldn't want a little boost to be smarter? Using stroke and Alzheimer's patients as guinea pigs, they uncover unsettling news—smarter doesn't mean kinder. But what would happen if infants had a bit of help right at the start? One of the scary things in Brodsky's novel is that it feels very real; we are right up against these questions in ways few of us realize.

"I wrote the book in the library in the medical sciences building at Yale," Brodsky said. Her husband was then working on his PhD in genetics, while Brodsky, realizing a life in a lab was not for her, had gotten a graduate degree in engineering, believing it a more practical career. But she didn't enjoy it: "Then I taught science and worked at environmental nonprofits." Nothing seemed to fit. "Then I met a friend of mine for coffee. He suggested that we write a page a week and send it to each other to help figure out where we were going. We didn't actually send pages to each other. But that got me writing."

Brodsky, who returned to her hometown right before the pandemic, said she uses writing to articulate "things I have on my mind that I don't necessarily understand. I didn't intend to be a writer; it's more that I did it and saw that's what I wanted to do." The world within labs is both competitive and insular, she said. "So many of my friends are so smart and dedicated to their science, but because of the work-life balance, they have chosen to try something different. It's a very difficult field to both be a success and live your life. I wanted to set a book in that culture. There's a competitive pressure to publish—and sometimes biology doesn't cooperate, and there's only one way out."

Far more can go wrong than fudging a result: "There isn't much oversight when you're at the top of your field," she said. "I think that's particularly relevant in the tech industry. People are smart, and they have a lot of hubris. AI is a good analogue. It's happening so fast, and we know it needs regulation. But the people working on it who understand it won't be the ones regulating it. I love science and think there is so much potential for good, but we need to have oversight. Oversight is lacking when things move so quickly, such as with gene editing and new technologies. The people who understand the science don't live in the same world we live in. It's a very narrow world."

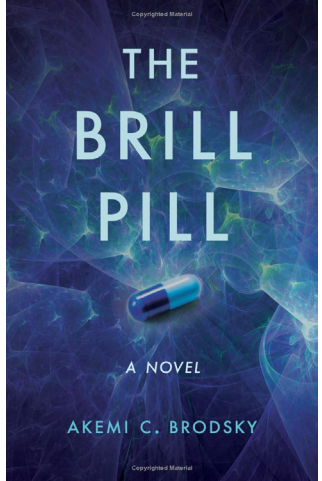
That culture and concern drive *The Brill Pill*, a novel that will alarm readers with its characters' choices in a setting few truly know.



Rip Matteson Exhibit

By Rosary Matteson

An art exhibit and reception celebrating the life and work of longtime Kensington resident Rip Matteson will be held September 10 at 683 Oberlin Ave., from 2-5pm. Paintings, drawings, and cartoons are discounted 50 percent. Not set up for credit cards; purchases only by cash or check. No small children, please.



Passings

June Doris Andrews Cheit, a 66-year resident of Kensington, died June 29 at a hospital in Berkeley at the age of 97, after a fall at home. She was predeceased by her husband of 63 years, Earl F. "Budd" Cheit, and a daughter, Danielle Wendy Cheit. She is survived by two sons, David and Ross, a daughter, Julie Ross, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Her family's connection to the public schools was deep: all of her children went to Kensington Elementary School, Portola Junior High School, and El Cerrito or John F. Kennedy High School, and her husband was on the Richmond High School District board (elected 1961) and then the Richmond Unified School District board (elected 1965). Throughout her life, June was an avid supporter of many organizations that reflected her interests, including theater, music, art, literature, education, and botany, and volunteered for over 20 years at the University of California Botanical Gardens. No public memorial is planned. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the University of California Botanical Gardens, Cal Performances, Ashby Village, or DonorsChoose.



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The Far-reaching Impact of Summer Day Camps



By Jenny Parks, KCC Recreation Director

Summer day camps, such as the Kensington Community Council's Summer Camp, hold a special place in the hearts of children and parents alike. These camps offer a break from routine, allowing youngsters to immerse themselves in exciting adventures and to discover new interests. From arts and crafts to sports, science, and outdoor exploration, summer day camps cater to a wide range of passions, ensuring every child finds something to captivate his or her imagination.

While the primary goal of summer day camps is to provide a memorable and enjoyable experience, they also offer a plethora of developmental benefits. Camps encourage children to step outside of their comfort zones, fostering self-confidence and independence. By participating in various group activities, kids learn teamwork, effective communication, and problem-solving skills, which are essential for their personal growth.

One of the most cherished aspects of summer day camps is the opportunity to forge lasting friendships. Children from different backgrounds and neighborhoods come together, creating a diverse and inclusive environment. Bonds formed in the camp setting often lead to lifelong friendships, as shared experiences and challenges solidify connections that transcend the camp's duration.

Today's children spend a significant amount of time in front of screens, even at school. Summer day camps provide a healthy break from electronic devices; they allow children to engage in real world activities, outdoor adventures, and face-to-face interactions. This digital detox is essential for promoting creativity, social skills, and a sense of connection with the world around them.

KCC's Summer Camp offers a magical blend of learning, adventure, and friendship. Such camps provide a supportive environment where children can explore their interests, build life skills, and create unforgettable memories.





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New Principal Ushers in Innovations at Hilltop

By Linnea Due

Changes are afoot at Kensington Hilltop Elementary: a statewide program began at Hilltop this August called TK, or transitional kindergarten. This program opens up the kindergarten experience to four-year-olds, but only some schools participate. Kensington now will be one of those schools.

Part of the initiative is funding for new play equipment in the kindergarten playground and new furniture in the classrooms, such as water tables and a puppet theater. But the biggest change at Hilltop is new principal Kim Jordan.

Jordan taught at the elementary school level for almost twenty years, most recently at Piedmont's Havens Elementary School. "It's a school very similar to Kensington," Jordan said. "I loved being a teacher, and I taught every grade except kindergarten. Then I decided to go into administration. I'm very excited about changes in education."

She received her masters at the Principal Leadership Institute through UC Berkeley's School of Education. There were no assistant principal jobs open in area elementary schools, but networking landed a job as assistant principal at De Anza High. "I'd always intended to be in elementary, but there aren't that many admin jobs," she said. "To my surprise, I loved it." But she was glad when the principal job opened up at Hilltop. "I love elementary kids, and I'm super thrilled to be back with children. Kensington is a really warm and welcoming environment. It's a beautiful little school."

So far Jordan is impressed with the Hilltop community: "The teachers and parents are all in at Kensington." A group of teachers as well as individuals took time from summer break to meet with Jordan, as have parents involved with the PTA and the Kensington Education Foundation, which funds enrichment activities such as art, music, science projects, and more for Kensington youngsters.

COVID had a big impact on the community, Jordan said. "Parents weren't even allowed on the campus, so last year was the first year they could come back." She said there's enthusiasm to be involved but also a need to draw people back in. And COVID also affected the school community. "During COVID kids lost a year of social and educational development," Jordan said. "We're going to do assemblies and work on school culture. We'll reintroduce the peer mediation program. It trains the older kids to be peer leaders by resolving conflicts between the younger kids."

Kensington Education Foundation is supporting a program called Playworks. "That provides a more playful and inclusive recess experience," Jordan explained. "A coach creates experiences that are less competitive."

While kids lost a year or more during the pandemic, teachers, isolated in their Zoom windows, could not easily collaborate with their colleagues. Jordan wants to align curriculum on grade levels. "When students are in alignment, they should have similar experiences in grade levels. And you also check that there are no gaps or holes in learning as they move between grade levels. Kensington has a really robust reading program, and we want to build on those foundations so kids love reading."

At De Anza, Jordan analyzed data to make choices and decisions about what works and what doesn't. This might sound formulaic, but Jordan said curriculum structures depend on the strengths of the faculty. "When you have really experienced, strong teachers as we have at Kensington, you can give them curriculum goals. Then they add things and bring in other pieces to expand that curriculum. I'm not concerned about the formulaic piece when you have experienced teachers. When you have first-year teachers you say follow the curriculum. Here they can mix it up, and it makes it more fun to teach."

Jordan's focus on culture and inclusion should strengthen Hilltop's community. The Outlook will revisit the school in the spring to assess how the new programs, including the transitional kindergarten class, are faring.



Age requirement for parents considering enrolling their child in the TK program: Students who turn five between September 2, 2023, and April 2, 2024, are eligible for a Transitional Kindergarten program for the 2023-2024 school year.

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One Door Closes, Another Opens: Volunteers Help Police Stick to Policing

By Linnea Due

When Mike Logan lost the election for Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District board director last November, he thought about KPD Police Chief Mike Gancasz' oft-stated goal to start a community volunteer program—if only, Gancasz would say, "we had enough space." With the department out of the Public Safety Building and in the modular on San Pablo Avenue, there finally was space for volunteers. "I figured I was willing to put in time for the district, and this was just another way of doing it," Logan said in a recent interview. He approached the chief, and in April, the fledgling program began with three volunteers, Logan included.

Logan's first task was helping with traffic control for the 5k race at Colusa Circle. "I blocked off the street with my body," he quipped. "It wasn't very dangerous since no cars came up my street." There were other basic tasks. "I brought cars to the car wash and cleaned them out while I was there. The officers don't have time to do that stuff. And it's kinda cool to drive the squad cars."

Soon, though, Logan brought his experience being a past board director to the fore—as well as his expertise at websites and special effects. "I knew from being on the board that recruiting was really hard. But once I was volunteering, I saw how truly tough it was to get applicants. Officers were putting in a lot of hours just to recruit, going to academies, tabling at job fairs, and the like. I also saw that the district website was not very workable at recruiting. It was just a job posting."

After talking with Chief Gancasz and Sergeant Brian Lande, Logan took on the task of creating a modern recruiting website. "That's what I've been spending most of my time on. We wanted to make it look slicker and not static, make it very watchable. We thought of ways to make it using still frames and animating those." The site opens with a squad car posed in front of a gorgeous bay view on Highland Boulevard, then shots of the Community Center, the park, with an appealing typeface and descriptions of how satisfying it is to be part of the Kensington team. See Logan's work at <https://www.joinkensingtonpd.com/>

And part of the appeal at working in Kensington is how appreciative residents are of its police department. Logan said that was fully on show at August 1's National Night Out. All three volunteers joined members of the force to attend parties residents put on. "I was amazed at how many people were out," he said. "There were a dozen parties and twenty or thirty or even forty people at each one. We had so many we had to split into two groups to hit them all. You get there and you're just talking."

Which proved to be a challenge for Logan: "I was sort of the clock manager. It was tough dragging [officers] away from residents to go to another party. They were deep in conversation." Logan thinks National Night Out is a great way for the police to reach out to the community. "But it's also a way for the community to show support for the force—and show how highly we think of them. It helps with the general morale."

Logan believes volunteers can play an important role. "One of the main things I want to do is alleviate time that they're not policing or they're clocking overtime. We're overworking our police department. They work a lot of hours. I'm amazed at the dedication they have. They need home lives. I'm willing to do anything that I can to help."

A special perk: Police volunteers wear a uniform shirt and ball cap that identifies them as a volunteer. Logan volunteers once a week. If you're interested in a program that's still finding its footing and has a great deal of flexibility and need for a range of talents, contact Chief Gancasz by email at MGancasz@kppcsd.org.



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Expect to meet new people
at KCC's annual Picnic
in the Park October 22.



Josh, Camden, and Hadley Dickinson at Zip Code East Bay's Colusa Circle 5k. Photo by Colleen Phan-Eversman.

Josh Dickinson Recognized for Environmental Leadership in Real Estate

By Erika Ramirez, Zip Code East Bay

In a landscape where real estate's environmental impact looms large, Josh Dickinson, owner and broker of Zip Code East Bay, strives to incorporate eco-friendly practices in his professional and personal life. This dedication to the environment has earned him the prestigious EverGreen Award bestowed by the National Association of Realtors' Green REsource Council.

The EverGreen Award honors individuals who passionately advocate for sustainability within their community, work, and personal pursuits. At the heart of Dickinson's philosophy is the belief that transformative change begins at "home." He has become a trusted resource for those seeking environmentally friendly housing options, and his initiatives span from educating the community about green building techniques and energy-efficient strategies to spearheading events such as community cleanups and recycling drives. His innovative green listing program, Zip Code ECO, mirrors renowned green building certification programs to green every step of the real estate transaction. These awards shape the future of real estate and create a roadmap for healthier, more sustainable homes.



Circuitous Course to West Point For Tal Zvik

By Kim Zvik

Tal Zvik, a Hilltop Elementary and El Cerrito High School graduate, started at the United States Military Academy at West Point this fall. He joined the Navy after graduating four years ago. Zvik became interested in the military when scouts came to El Cerrito High in his sophomore year. He started in the Navy Seals and then became a hospital corpsman like his grandfather. Lucky to have a four-year assignment in San Diego, he enjoyed the weather and a deployment on the USS Mercy hospital ship last summer in the South Pacific.

After being nominated by our US representative, Mark DeSaulnier, Zvik applied last year to West Point. After not being admitted, he tried again. While waiting, he went through field medic training in the Marines. This year, because he was stationed in San Diego, US Representative Juan Vargas nominated Zvik. Getting into West Point is not easy, but in his case it was even harder because he had to get permission from the Navy to leave to become an Army Cadet!

He was accepted in February after getting a Navy release. Because the Navy is undermanned, they were reluctant to let him go. Representative Vargas' staff was able to work with the Secretary of the Navy, and Zvik found out in May—just in time to join West Point's boot camp in June.

He flew with him to New York where he became a cadet. This was right when New York was flooded with unseasonal rain. They call this six-week boot camp Cadet Basic Training or Beast. He said for the five boot camps he's survived, Navy Recruit Training, Navy Seal Hell Week, Corpsman Training, and Marine Field Medic Training, Beast was the hardest in terms of discipline.

Last week he began his academic work and plans to do equestrian, triathlon, or Sandhurst, a team military skills competition, as his sport. He is majoring in International Relations and taking Russian.



New Programming at Kensington Hilltop Elementary Needs Your Support

By Rae Quigley, Kensington Education Foundation

As the seasons begin to change, so do the opportunities for young learners at Kensington Hilltop Elementary School. The parent-funded Kensington Education Foundation (KEF) is proud to unveil its exciting lineup of enrichment programs designed to provide hands-on learning experiences for students from Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten to 6th grade.

The enrichment programs KEF provides supplement and complement the formal classroom curriculum. From science labs that spark curiosity to music and art that ignite creativity, these programs are tailored to nurture young minds beyond textbooks. In addition to Science, Art, Music, PE, Library, Reading and Math Intervention, and Running Club, this year also brings STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics) classes, new Performing Arts classes, and Playworks recess support and Social Emotional Learning.

We're proud to be a community that values education and the holistic development of our children. To make these programs a reality, we need support from parents and the community at large. Every dollar from our Fall Pledge campaign directly contributes to the continuation of these vital enrichment programs. Every pledge, no matter the size, makes a meaningful impact on the lives of our students. Join us in empowering young minds and enriching education by following us on facebook.com/KensingtonEducationFoundation. You'll find more information about how to pledge and about our upcoming events, such as this year's Enchanted Garden Theme party taking place on November 4 at the Rockefeller Lodge in San Pablo. Save the date!

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Kensington After School Enrichment Program

Summer Camp

As we bid farewell to yet another remarkable summer at KCC Summer Camp, we celebrate the laughter, friendships, and growth that have defined our time together. From the wide-open spaces of Kensington Park to the joyous interactions with animals and the creative projects that fill our indoor spaces, every moment has contributed to an unforgettable summer experience. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our dedicated staff, supportive families, and most importantly our incredible campers, for making this summer an unforgettable chapter in the story of KCC Summer Camp. Until we gather again next year, the memories we've created will continue to warm our hearts and inspire us to plan for next year's summer camp. Mark your calendars, registration opens February 27th, 2024.



KCC Camp wouldn't be what it is without our amazing camp staff, most of whom were KCC campers themselves. A special thanks to all of our counselors this year. Kelly Barry, Camp Director, Maddie Heath and Ayaz Earley co-head counselors, Anna Thomsen, Ailish Smith, Ari Henry, Cole Wallace-Wayne, Finn Goodman, Helen Stephens, Kaleb Paige, Leah Forrest, Will Diego, Mateo Bense, Mira Henry, Brenna Moore, Sylvie Diego, Mia Syren and Cooper Heath.

KASEP

KASEP classes begin the week of Sept. 11th. We are offering more than 60 classes this fall for kids K-6 after school. Many of your favorite classes will be back including Carpentry with Sandy Thacker, Gymnastics with Bindy Baker and Cooking classes with Vicky Brodt. We will be offering a new Chess Club on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and Elaine Chu will be back to teach Mandarin through Art. Check our website for a full list of classes.

Important Dates - mark your calendars
August 29th - Fall KASEP Registration @ 7pm for kindergarten and 7:30 for grades 1-6
September 11th - Fall KASEP Classes begin
September 23rd - KCC Family Movie Night in the Kensington park
October 22nd - KCC Fall Picnic at the Kensington Community Center



Adult and Family Classes

Mediterranean cooking classes continue on Tuesdays in September: Mediterranean cooking is influenced by the food of people living along the Mediterranean Sea. This includes 22 countries like Spain, Morocco, Italy, Greece, Egypt, Tunisia, Israel, Lebanon, Turkey, Croatia, France, Italy and Slovenia to name a few. This cooking class will focus on creating healthy, mostly plant based meals from a number of these countries. This is a great class to learn new techniques, interesting recipes, new herb combinations and how to utilize more seasonal produce. Join us each week or when you're free. We will also be offering something tasty to learn and eat. Classes are Tuesday nights from 6-8pm during the school year. Lesson plans will be posted a week before each class on KCC Instagram.

August 29th, Sicilian Cuisine Part 1
September 5th, Sicilian Cuisine Part 2
September 12th, French Mediterranean Cuisine Part 1
September 19th, French Mediterranean Part 2
September 26th. Sardinian Cuisine

Family Toddler Yoga in the Park Lori Hess with Way to Glow Kids Yoga will host family yoga time when parents and kids will playfully explore yoga poses, breathing exercises, and mindfulness activities together. Family Yoga will take place on Saturdays @ 10:00-10:45 (kids aged 2 to 5) and @ 11:00-11:45 (kids aged 5 to 10) on the grassy lawn outside the KCC Office/Recreation Building (past the tennis courts) or, if raining, class will be inside the Recreation Building. Next classes will be 9/2, 9/23, and 9/30. If possible, please bring a waterproof blanket/tarp, two yoga mats (we will have extra mats available if needed), warm layers, and a water bottle. Masks are optional. Suggested cost: \$25 per person; discounted tuition and scholarships are available. Please complete a registration form at <https://bit.ly/38Sq91k> and contact waytoglowkidsyoga@gmail.com with questions about the class.

Adult Yoga Class at the Community Center

Strength & Balance Yoga -Tuesdays at 8:30am
Thursday 11:30 Gentle Yoga starts back up Sept. 7th
Teacher Anja Borgstrom
Cost is \$20 drop in or register online
Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi
Wednesdays & Fridays 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.

[Weekend Tennis court reservations can now be made online at KPPCSD.org/tennis-courts](https://KPPCSD.org/tennis-courts)

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
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Our website is: www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org.



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KENSINGTON EATS OUT

Kensington Eats Out at Jot Mahal

By Ittai Shiu

From a young age, Gurnam Singh discovered his passion for cooking, which would later develop into an obsession with organic and Halal ingredients. For over twenty years he has been an East Bay authority on Indian cuisine, which eventually allowed him to pursue his dream of opening his own restaurant in 2017.

Named after his two children, Jot Mahal is nestled in the Gourmet Ghetto at the corner of Shattuck and Cedar. Located between the renowned Chez Panisse and the soon-to-open Farmhouse Kitchen, the restaurant stands out in the heart of a community claiming some of the best restaurants in the Bay Area. Jot Mahal, however, still manages to convey the sense of enjoying a home-cooked meal in a neighbor’s dining room.

My kids always insist on three things at any Indian restaurant: Mango Lassi, Chicken Tikka Masala, and freshly baked naan. Of course, Jot Mahal didn’t disappoint, with fluffy naan straight from the oven, perfectly accompanying a tikka masala cooked with the same commitment to quality as all of the dishes on the menu. The fruity, yogurt-based lassi is the ideal drink to cool down their young palettes.



The Karahi Lamb, a staff recommendation, took center stage for me. Sautéed with fresh bell peppers, tomatoes, onions, ginger, and a blend of aromatic spices, this dish transported me back to my travels to India and the bustling streets of Old Delhi. The rich spiciness sent tingling sensations down my spine, leaving a warm and satisfying afterglow. An icy, extra-large Kingfisher beer offered a refreshing respite.

One of Jot Mahal's signature dishes, Vegetable Korma, has undergone an evolution to cater to a wider audience. Traditionally prepared with nuts, Singh decided to phase them out and strike a balance between yogurt, coconut, spices, and tomatoes. This thoughtful adaptation not only ensured that the dish remained accessible to those with nut allergies but also enhanced its overall taste and texture.

Gurnam Singh's journey from a childhood fascination with food to becoming the proprietor of Jot Mahal is a testament to his dedication and commitment, especially as the restaurant continues to recover from the challenges of the pandemic. By drawing



inspiration from his family and infusing his dishes with the best ingredients, he has carved a unique niche for his restaurant in the vibrant culinary community of the Gourmet Ghetto. Singh dropped by our table towards the end of our meal, and we gladly gave our compliments. A dedicated family man himself, he was happy to see our kids satisfied, which is when he proudly offered one more perk...access to his soft-serve ice cream machine! A chocolate and vanilla swirl, perhaps not traditional, was still a perfect end to the meal.



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