

Alamo Today

July 2014

Serving Alamo and Diablo

Alamo Volunteers Close to Final Approvals for Hap Magee Labyrinth

By Sharon Burke

Alamo community members hoping to see a hand-crafted paver labyrinth installed at Hap Magee Ranch Park next winter are close to seeing their dream become reality.

The project began with the tragic death of 24 year old Alamo resident Will Schramm, who died in a traffic accident on Stone Valley Road in spring of 2013. Friends and family members made donations in his memory to the San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church to construct a labyrinth as a peaceful, healing memorial in stone. From that beginning, the project has become more inclusive and is no longer intended strictly as a memorial but as a gift to the community from the Church and friends of the Schramm family.



Representation of potential labyrinth design.

The proposal for the labyrinth was first reviewed by the Danville Parks and Recreation Commission at its April meeting, and it received an enthusiastic 9-0 vote. Commissioners lauded the proposal for its beauty and its fit with the passive peaceful nature of Hap Magee Ranch Park. The next hurdle was the Alamo MAC, which likewise gave the labyrinth a unanimous thumbs up, followed by a unanimous recommendation from the Danville Arts Commission, which reviewed the proposal since the labyrinth is considered an art installation.

The project will be reviewed by the Danville Town Council at its July 1st meeting where it is anticipated that approval will follow the recommendations of the two Town commissions.

See *Labyrinth* continued on page 20



Concert-goers enjoyed an evening with The Sun Kings performing on June 20th as part of Alamo's Summer Concert Series. An estimated 700 people enjoyed the outdoor music event. Check out page 2 for information on upcoming concerts to be held at Livorna Park on **July 11, July 25, and August 8**. Photo by Sharon Burke.

Save the Date for the Alamo Music Festival

Saturday, September 6

The Rotary Club of Alamo will be sponsoring the 32nd Annual Alamo Music and Wine Festival on **Saturday, September 6 from 3:30^{PM} to 10:30^{PM}** at Alamo Plaza.

The fun-filled event will benefit the Alamo community and the music programs at six local schools.

Headlining the event will be the Groove Doctors, an 8-piece band, who will perform from 8 to 10:30^{PM}. Performing from 4 to 7^{PM} will be local school bands and choirs. The afternoon will be filled with food, games, and business booths for the whole family to enjoy. Dinner will be served from 5:30 to 8^{PM} and dinner tickets are \$15.

The 32nd Annual Alamo Music and Wine Festival will also feature a raffle with great prizes. Raffle tickets may be purchased from Alamo Rotarians, members of the Interact Club, or at the Rotary booth. Tickets are \$5 each or five tickets for \$20.

Bring your family, neighbors, and friends to what is definitely Alamo's biggest and best block party.

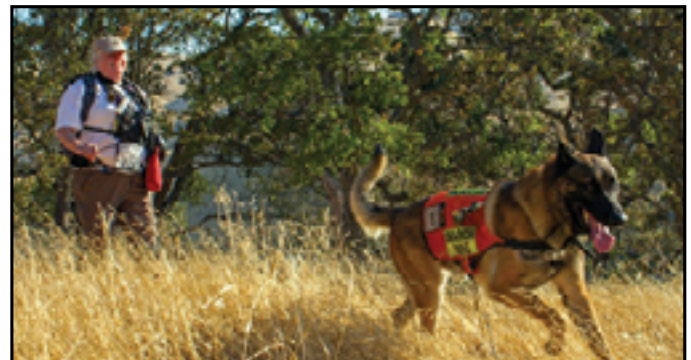


California Rescue Dog Association: Barking up the Right Tree

By Jody Morgan

Founded in 1976, California Rescue Dog Association (CARDA) is the largest search dog organization in the US. Highly motivated handlers teamed with high-drive canine partners make CARDA the standard-setting model for rescue dog operations throughout the country. An all-volunteer, non-profit organization available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to assist local, state, and federal agencies, CARDA has participated in 4,057 searches in the past 13 years. From 2000 through May 2014, CARDA volunteers served 103,835 hours and drove their personally owned vehicles 1,582,482 miles to support search and rescue efforts. Estimating expenses at \$0.56/mile and time at \$25/hour, CARDA contributed \$3.34 million in aid to California Public Safety Agencies during that time frame. The value of lives saved and peace of mind restored is incalculable.

CARDA volunteers are devoted to the success of each mission and totally disinterested in individual recognition. In a large Area Search, such as when a hiker goes missing, each rescue team is given a sector to cover. The job is to find any trace of human presence. Success means missing no clues, but not necessarily finding the subject who may never have passed through that particular space. Trailing, whether in an urban or rural setting, begins with a scent article specific to the subject. An Alzheimer's patient often travels the same path through a neighborhood daily. Discerning the freshest trail is important. Has a runaway teen hopped public transportation? Trailing teams investigate BART stations and bus stops to determine whether the



Kathryn Stewart follows Max's lead. Photo courtesy of CARDA.

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See *CARDA* continued on page 28

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Boulevard View

By Alisa Corstorphine, Editor

A rush-hour motorcycle accident found our family assuming the temporary role as caregivers to a 30 year old friend. He came to our home after three days in the hospital, could barely be scooted into the family minivan for the trip home, and was sent to us with a wheelchair and other care accessories. He had broken bones and a deep cut. Before bringing him home I gave him a "contract" of House Rules. In part they said, "No 'pity parties,'" "Naps are mandatory," and "Rent is payable in cookies and home cooked meals as you get better."

He has been a motivated patient, and after four days he ditched the wheelchair and has been limping around in an orthopedic boot and with a cast on his hand. Several friends have come around to visit, and many asked if he was going to get back on a motorcycle. Personally, I am not a huge fan of motorcycles, mostly because of other drivers, however, my adult children have chosen to get their motorcycle license, commute on their motorcycles, and participate in motorcycle track days. So, I am surrounded by others who enjoy riding.

About a week after we brought our friend home, he took a picture while sitting on my son's bike and sent it to a friend of his who had also been helping with his care. The "back in the saddle" picture did not go over well with the recipient, and the recipient and I started chatting about our friend getting back on his bike. I came to the realization that I had to let my concerns for our patient go. First of all, whether he chooses to ride again or not is really out of my sphere of control.

I think the first part of me releasing how our friend moves forward was when our friend told me the song he was listening to when he got in the accident was called "Live Your Life." It made me realize that while I hate for anything bad to happen, it is not MY life that I'd be trying to control anyways. I started thinking of when ages ago I taught horsemanship to kids. When the kids got bucked off or fell off the horse, the first thing I need to do was to get them back in the saddle.

Recently we had a family party at our home and there were a ton of little kids. My four year old great niece was nervous to swim and would barely get in the pool. After working with her I had her paddling around and jumping off the edge of the pool to me. Later in the day she was feeling a little overconfident and playing a little further in the pool than she should have. She started going under

and fortunately an adult saw it and called out. I jumped in and pulled her out. I think it was really only a matter of a few seconds she was going under, but if there weren't vigilant eyes on her she could have drowned. The parents rightly fussed over her, but I made sure that when they were done with their coddling they gave her to me so I could get her back in the pool again. I didn't want her last thoughts of the day to be a negative and scary one where she would be afraid to swim again. Rapidly I had her jumping and splashing again -- back in the saddle.

Through this journey random timely quotes have been popping out to me that capture some of the thoughts that have been going through my mind during this experience.

- "All the fear in the world doesn't prevent death—it prevents life."
- "You can limit risky behavior, but you can't eliminate risk."
- "Courage begets courage, like fear begets fear."
- "I realized that in my struggle to keep out every possible threat, I had been keeping out one very important thing: possibility."
- You can't plan for unexpected events, but you can make the best of them.

Marc Chernoff, coauthor of *1,000 Little Things Happy Successful People Do Differently* wrote a post titled "8 Things To Remember When Everything Is Going Wrong." He noted, "There is always, always, always something to be thankful for. And that no matter how good or bad I have it, I must wake up each day thankful for my life, because someone somewhere else is desperately fighting for theirs."

"Truth be told, happiness is not the absence of problems, but the ability to deal with them...Always look at what you have, instead of what you have lost. Because it's not what the world takes away from you that counts; it's what you do with what you have left."

Chernoff continues, "Don't be afraid to get back up—to try again, to love again, to live again, and to dream again. Don't let a hard lesson harden your heart. Life's best lessons are often learned at the worst times and from the worst mistakes. There will be times when it seems like everything that could possibly go wrong is going wrong. And you might feel like you will be stuck in this rut forever, but you won't. When you feel like quitting, remember that sometimes things have to go very wrong before they can be right. Sometimes you have to go through the worst, to arrive at your best."

So, whatever choices are made, I know our friend will make them with good thought and consideration. We each have to live our own life and pave our own path, and it is not for me to dictate. That's why I let go of being angry, upset... about choices he or anyone else choose to make. That's for me. His path is his.

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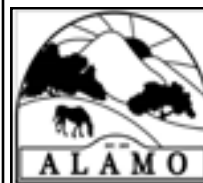
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Alamo Municipal Advisory Council presents the 2014 Summer Concert Series

Fridays 6:30-8:30p.m.

at Livorna Park

(At the corner of Livorna Road and Miranda Avenue in Alamo)

Admission is Free

June 20th: The Sun Kings

Performing the music of The Beatles with driving energy, authentic arrangements and spot-on harmonies, reminiscent of the earliest Beatles concerts!



July 11th: The Fabulous Cruise Tones

Enjoy a wide variety of familiar dance songs from any decade up to the hits of today!

July 25th: El Desayuno

"Great musicians, a Latin groove, killer live performance...connect the dots and you've got El Desayuno." Roy Jeans ~ Armando's



August 8th: Moonalice

An original blend of Rock, Country and Blues music. Evoking a communal experience between band and listener, Moonalice has something for everyone!



Bring blankets, chairs, snacks, family, and friends.
For information call Recreation Staff at (925) 313-2272.



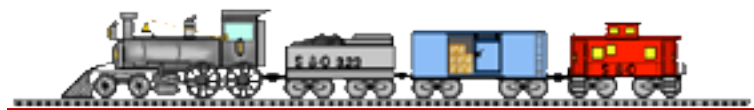
Totally Trains and Pageant of the Pacific Exhibits

The Museum of the San Ramon Valley proudly presents Totally Trains-Models and Memorabilia running again through the Freight Room at the Depot through August 17. Also during this time the Pageant of the Pacific: 75th Anniversary of the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition exhibit will be featured in the Depot Waiting Room.



The Golden Gate International Exposition created a magical city of Treasure Island 75 years ago. The Museum and friends have trotted out the scrapbooks and raided old storage boxes for pictures, mementos, and stories that recount the Treasure Island Fair in all its glory. Tired of the long depression and tuning out distant conflicts, the San Francisco Bay Area threw a gigantic party for a few months before the inferno of war overwhelmed any lighthearted spirit.

Once again the Museum is using its own wonderful train collection, including the popular Lady Lionel or Girl's Train. The exhibit will feature the Museum's O-Gauge models that span the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries with freight and passenger trains pulled by both diesel and steam engines. The Museum's scratch-built village models, including the replica of the Museum, the former Danville SP Depot, will be on display along with selected Lionel pieces on loan again to the Museum from Bob and Cheryl Miranda.



Don't forget to purchase a Totally Trains Family Pass! The family ticket is only \$10 again this year and allows for a daily visit to the Museum during the train exhibit's run.

The Museum is open Tuesdays through Friday from 10^{AM} to 1^{PM}, Saturdays from 9^{AM} to 1^{PM}, and Sundays from 12^{PM} to 4^{PM}.

The Museum is located at 205 Railroad Ave. in Danville. For more information, call 925-837-3750 or visit www.museumsv.org.

Sculpture in the Garden By Jody Morgan

The Ruth Bancroft Garden's 20th annual Sculpture in the Garden event runs **through July 13th**. Jurors have selected works by 51 artists for exhibition and sale. In addition, the Art Walk features a range of pieces priced to fit every budget. Art & Jazz in the Garden on **July 11th from 5-8^{pm}** invites visitors to enjoy the sculpture while strolling with a glass of wine in hand or pause at a garden table for food. Live music by Dogbone offers additional inspiration for painters working at easels throughout the garden.

Ruth Bancroft always insisted that in her garden the plants were sufficiently sculptural and man-made objects were a distraction from the natural show. However, once she agreed to open her horticultural collection as the first garden in the Garden Conservancy in 1992, a major fundraiser was needed. Hence, for a month each year, the Ruth Bancroft Garden becomes an open-air gallery.

Many of the exhibitors have a puckish sense of humor evident in their art. Joe Bologna, who crafts found objects into intricate metal sculptures, decided many years ago that one of his pieces that had not sold really belonged in the garden. He left it in a remote spot with a tag that read: "To Ruth from Joe." Even though Ruth toiled in the garden for hours each day, she didn't discover Joe's prank until long after the show closed. As the story goes, Ruth telephoned Joe and chided him: "You know, Joe, I don't approve of sculpture in my garden." Pausing just long enough to tease, she added, "But, Joe, I really like it and I'm going to keep it." The only piece to find a permanent home at the RBG, Bologna's sculpture blends so well among the Dyckias in bed 5A, that visitors often ask: "Has that cactus died or is it dormant?"

Artists particularly appreciate displaying their work against the dramatic background the garden provides. Hours are spent finding the best space to showcase each sculpture. A complete list of artists as well as information on garden hours and entrance fees can be found at www.ruthbancroftgarden.org. Tickets for the Art & Jazz Sunset Social are \$15 online or \$25 at the door. Food and drinks are sold separately. The Ruth Bancroft Garden is located at 1552 Bancroft Road in Walnut Creek.



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Dr. Hyland received her Doctor of Dental Surgery from Baylor College of Dentistry in Dallas, Texas. She continued her education in a General Practice Residency at the Veteran Medical Center in West Los Angeles, California for an additional two years after dental school. Dr. Hyland decided to further her education and experience in a 3 year post graduate surgical residency in Periodontics. Dr. Hyland is qualified to perform dental implant placement, grafting procedures (tissue and bone), extraction of wisdom teeth, and all phases of periodontal disease treatments. She is an excellent restorative dentist who has the advantage of understanding the surgical requirements for individual cases.

Dr. Hyland has been in private practice since 2000. She has excelled in every aspect of dentistry from general cosmetic procedures to complex surgical cases. Dr. Hyland has placed thousands of successful dental implants. She is highly trained in surgical as well as non-surgical gum disease therapy.

As a resident in Alamo with a commitment to keep the family rooted in the local community, Dr. Hyland wishes to provide the best dental care for all Alamo residents and the surrounding communities. In her spare time, Dr. Hyland enjoys spending time with her husband Terry, two sets of twin boys and her two boxers.



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The current 4th of July parade began in 1962 when Virginia Deaton organized a pet parade, patriotic speeches, games for children and fireworks.
Happy 4th of July, Alamo!

Alamo Home Sales – June 2014			
	Bed/Bath	List Price	Sale Price
15 Augusta Court	3/2	\$1,395,000	\$1,250,000
920 Camille Lane	4/5½	\$2,350,000	\$2,350,000
280 Castle Crest Road	4/2½	\$1,239,000	\$1,302,000
56 Crest Estates Drive	4/3	\$1,565,000	\$1,555,000
10 Indian Way	4/4½	\$1,195,000	\$1,168,500
73 Janis Court	4/2½	\$1,259,000	\$1,259,000
937 Kirkcrest Road	4/2	\$1,224,000	\$1,375,000
2418 Roundhill Drive	5/3½	\$1,649,000	\$1,685,000
1500 Serafix Road	5/4	\$1,795,000	\$1,795,000
124 Tracy Court	5/3½	\$1,498,000	\$1,480,000
365 Tracy Way	4/3	\$1,250,000	\$1,180,000
501 Wild Flower Place	4/2½	\$1,395,000	\$1,415,000


* All single family homes sold in Alamo 05/24/14 thru 06/19/14



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Chris Campbell's family has lived in Alamo for nearly 100 years. As a lifetime Alamo resident, Chris' knowledge and affection for the area give him unique insight into the Alamo real estate market and local community. Chris Campbell is your neighbor and Alamo's Real Estate Expert!

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Danville Library Book Sale

Friends of the Danville Library invite you to view new and used books for sale on July 18, 19, and 20.

- Friday ~ 9^{AM} - 10^{AM}, Members Only; 10^{AM} - 5^{PM}, Open to the public
- Saturday ~ 10^{AM} - 4^{PM}
- Sunday ~ 12:05^{PM} - 3:45^{PM}, Bag Sale \$5

The selection includes children's books, CD's, DVD's, and vintage books. The library is located at 400 Front St. in Danville. For questions call 925-837-4889.

San Ramon Valley Newcomers Club

The San Ramon Valley Newcomers Club will hold its monthly luncheon on July 17 at the Prickley Pear Cantina in Blackhawk Plaza. This luncheon is open to current and prospective members in the San Ramon Valley Area. For further information or a reservation, please contact Dee Bradshaw at (925)837-9600 or visit www.srvnc.com.

Alamo-Danville Newcomers Club

Are you new to the area or a long time resident interested in making new friends and participating in various social activities? We are a women's organization whose purpose is to enrich the lives of all its members and their families in a social manner.

Check out all we have to offer by visiting www.alamodanvillnewcomers.com. Our next new member coffee is August 26th at 10^{am}. RSVP to alamodanvillnewcomers@gmail.com.

Exchange Club of SRV

The Exchange Club of San Ramon Valley meets for lunch the second Wednesday of every month in downtown Danville. Sign-in and social time begins at 11:30^{AM}. The meeting starts promptly at noon and ends promptly at 1^{PM}. The program features guest speakers and a business networking speaker. For more information, call Karen Stepper at (925) 275-2312, email coachstepper@yahoo.com, or visit www.srvexchangeclub.org.



Alamo Municipal Advisory Council presents

2014 Movie Under the Stars


Friday, July 18th

Movie starts at 8:30 p.m.
at Livorna Park in Alamo
(Located at the corner of Livorna Road and Miranda Avenue)



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Sons in Retirement

Sons in Retirement - Las Trampas Branch 116 will be holding a luncheon meeting. The speaker for July will be Mr. Wayne Korsinen, who will be unfolding the story of how the small town of Port Chicago was badly damaged, but survived, a wartime explosion at an ammunition pier just two miles away. It was the most powerful man-made detonation prior to the atomic bomb explosion on Hiroshima, Japan. This 1944 blast involved 10,000 tons of explosives and killed 323 servicemen and wounded 500 others. The presentation will also uncover how the United States Navy launched a 13 year campaign (1955-1968) against Port Chicago and finally succeeded in uprooting the town from the county. Today Port Chicago is a ghost town.

Lunch begins at **11:30^{am}, July 21st**, at the Walnut Creek Elks Lodge, 1475 Creekside Dr. in Walnut Creek. Guest are welcome. Please make reservations by calling 925-322-1160 by Wednesday, July 16th. The cost is \$15.

For information about SIR activities for retired men, please visit www.Branch116.org. Among the many fun activities we enjoy, golf is our most popular. We have an active golf organization consisting of 18-hole and 9-hole groups. The 18-hole group plays once a week in a Tournament format with play alternating between local courses and courses that may be 10 to 50 miles away. The 9-hole group plays every Wednesday, rotating play between Buchanan Fields, Concord, Pine Meadows, Martinez, and Diablo Hills in Walnut Creek. Foursomes in both the 18-hole and 9-hole groups are arranged so that players can meet and enjoy playing with most, if not all, the other players in the branch. Guest are welcomed to play.

Museum Volunteers Needed

Looking to get involved in the community? The Museum of the San Ramon Valley needs your help. Volunteer positions are available in the following areas:

- Greeters
- Docents
- Walking Tour Docents
- Events Committee
- Educational Programs (One Room School/Indian Life)

Call Eve or Donna at 552-9693, or email srvmuseum@sbcglobal.net for additional information.

San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society

The San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society was formed in 1985 and now has over 170 members. The group meets at 10^{AM} the third Tuesday of every month, except in August and December. The group gathers at the Danville Family History Center located at 2949 Stone Valley Road, Alamo.

The **June 17th** meeting will feature Richard Ferman talking on "Pennsylvania Research."

The group also conducts educational classes for its members and has various special interest groups.

Everyone is welcome. For information, call Ed at (925) 299-0881, visit www.srvgensoc.org, or email SRVGS@SRVGenSoc.org.

Diablo Singles Dance Club

Diablo Singles Dance Club holds a public dance the last Wednesday of each month from 7:30^{pm}-10:30^{pm} at the Shadelands Art Center located at 111 N. Wiget Lane in Walnut Creek. There is live music, refreshments, and free parking. The cost is \$7 for members and \$9 for non-members. For information, call (925) 837-2851.

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The above community statements are that of their Ordinary citizens. All comments are deemed true and are in record for the specific purposes for marketing and advertising for their buildings.

Want to Become a Better Speaker?

Toastmasters allows its members to practice their speaking and presentation skills in a supportive environment. Our local club, Danville AM Toastmasters, meets every Tuesday from 7 to 8:30^{AM} at Father Nature's Restaurant in downtown Danville (172 E Prospect Ave). Please drop by and visit us! For more information, contact Hans Thoma at danvilletoastmasters@outlook.com.

Alamo Sheriff's Station Staffed and Ready

The Contra Costa County Sheriff's Station, located in the Alamo Shopping Center, is now staffed with volunteers to assist you Monday through Saturday from 8^{am}-5^{pm} and Sunday from 8^{am}-12:30^{pm}. When closed, citizens can use the outdoor red phone for all emergency and non-emergency calls.

For help or information, call (925) 646-6180 or visit the office at 150 Alamo Plaza #C.

Search and Rescue

The Contra Costa County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team needs volunteer members to respond to missing person incidents, disasters, and other critical incidents. Team members are on call 24/7 year-round. The program provides required training; including wilderness traveling, first aid, map and compass usage, tracking disaster response, and search skills; and may also include special training for canine, equestrian, technical, mountain bike, or other rescue skills. For information and applications, visit www.contracostasar.org or call 646-4461.

Upcoming Community Meetings and Events

AIA - Alamo Improvement Association - Please visit www.alamoca.org for upcoming meetings - Creekside Community Church -1350 Danville Blvd.

Alamo MAC (Municipal Advisory Committee) - First Tuesday of each month 6^{pm} - Alamo Women's Club

P2B - Police Services Advisory Committee - First Monday of each month, 5^{pm} - Meets at Alamo Chamber of Commerce Office located at 120 -B, Alamo Plaza

P5 - Round Hill Police Services Advisory Committee - Second Wednesday of each month, 7^{pm} - Meets at Round Hill Country Club - Lower Level Meeting Room

CERT classes - Community Emergency Response Team - Visit www.firedepartment.org/community_outreach/cert/upcoming_classes.asp

Operation Swingtime

Saluting Veterans Together

There was a day when veterans came home to their community with arms wide open. Communities would organize, have a parade, and celebrate their return. These traditions, like our veterans, have been forgotten. So in the spirit of remembering our veterans, Lamorinda's local Rotary Clubs are organizing a picnic to bring back a piece of history. Mark your calendar for **Saturday, July 19th, 5:30^{pm} – 8:30^{pm}**, and help honor our heroes with a spectacular USO show being held at the Lafayette Reservoir located at 3849 Mount Diablo Blvd, in Lafayette. If you stop by, this is what you will find:

- The Big Band of Rossmoor - A 32 member big band orchestra well known for sharing music with the generations for the past 22 years and is a part of Generations In Jazz Foundation, playing all things "American." Music will include hits from Glenn Miller, Gershwin, and the songs that Fred Astair danced to

- Special Guests - The Swingin Blue Stars -think of the Andrew Sisters singing "Don't Sit Under The Apple Tree," and more

- Military vehicles on display
- Rotary's new stage and picnic area overlooking the lake
- Veterans to be honored during the program
- A free event for the public and veterans alike

Help us reach out to all veterans to attend and remember those generations of Americans that were there for us when they were most needed.

Bring a blanket, your lawn chairs, and a picnic. The Lafayette Reservoir is located just west of downtown Lafayette, and parking is available at the Reservoir.

If you know of a veteran, please email Mo Levich at gto@67goat.com with name, rank, branch and years served, and let us know they are coming. A golf cart shuttle is available for those who may need assistance. Uniforms are optional but encouraged.

For more information, visit www.rotarylafayette.org.



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Alamo Elementary School

By Stan Hitomi, Principal

Alamo School – Good as Gold

Typically in July we are catching up on some much needed rest and looking forward to the next school year. This year things are a little different in that we are taking some time this summer to take a look back! That's because next year we will be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Alamo School... at its current location!

Our Alamo School opened its doors in 1965, making 2015 our Golden Anniversary year. Plans are being made for a celebration marking this anniversary in April of next year. We are hoping to have former staff, parents, and students join us for this celebratory event!

But as we begin making plans for this memorable event, we recognize that 1965 was far from the beginning of Alamo School. In the courtyard at Alamo School sits a plaque that reads:

ORIGINAL ALAMO SCHOOL BELL

Used from about 1880 to 1940

in the Second Alamo School Building which stood at the east side of Danville Blvd. near Stone Valley Road

This plaque is the most visible evidence that Alamo School's history extends beyond its current location that began in 1965. If you look at the district website, it lists the date of establishment for Alamo School as 1876, making it the oldest school in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District. However, according to information from the Museum of the San Ramon Valley, the first Alamo School was built in 1871 and destroyed by fire in 1893. A second Alamo School was built near the site of the first one and had a bell tower that housed the bell that is currently located in our courtyard.

In 1940 the third Alamo School was built on the same site as Alamo School #2. Additional schools were built as the town of Alamo continued to grow, including Stone Valley Intermediate (1952) and Rancho Romero Elementary (1959). Today's Alamo Elementary School at 100 Wilson Road opened in 1965.

As we move forward, closer to our Golden Anniversary, we will be involving students, parents, and staff in the exploration of the history of Alamo School. In our early explorations in our archives we found a copy our first yearbook (1965-66) with John C. Roberts as the founding principal. We are planning to work with the Museum of the San Ramon Valley to put together a better picture of the history of our school. Anyone who is interested in helping us with this work or can steer us to appropriate sources of information can contact me at Hitomi@srvusd.net.

Please look for more information about the history of Alamo School and our Golden Anniversary Celebration in future monthly letters.



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Stone Valley Middle School

By Shaun K. McElroy, Principal

As the school year closes and we leave each other for the summer, it is important that we reflect upon the accomplishments of the 2013-14 school year. In the process of implementing the common core state standards, we have changed our instructional practices and added strategies that are a grand departure from 150 years of teaching dogma. Here are our highlights:

- Changed our bell schedule to a modified block to allow for problem solving at a deeper level – each class now has an 83 minute block once each week

- Creating an E period elective program to support all learners needs – built in extra time for students needing academic support

- Combining the 7/8 grade lunches together to increase the opportunity for instructional coaching in the classroom – 600+ classroom visits by administration

- Used a variety common core state standards classroom practices

- Silicon Valley Math Initiative – problem of the month – students learned the “why” of math.

www.svmimac.org

- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Education became part of every classroom. <http://culturallyresponsive.org>

- Socratic Seminar - here's a example http://youtu.be/6pGVR6ZF_2M

- Decreased student discipline by 56% - more engaged students don't disrupt class

- Added a new special education class for more challenged learners (mild Special Day Class)

- Continued to increase the use of instructional technology by students in the classroom – opened the bring-your-own-device network to provide students with access to WiFi all over campus.

- Provided several parent education opportunities in the area of Common Core, LCAP Budgeting processes, raising girls, sex education, research based parenting practices

- 12th annual field day celebration – it just keeps getting better every year

- Student mentoring program celebrates five years

- Added Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) electives this year and next. Forensics, Engineering, and Social media

- Held vertical articulation with San Ramon Valley and Monte Vista High schools – aligned our practices for 8th and 9th grade students.

- Parent volunteerism rose to the level of having three full-time equivalent employees on campus everyday

Prior to the promotion ceremony on June 12, 100 8th grade students performed community service by creating 50 personal hygiene packs, making 500 sandwiches for a homeless shelter, setting up 800 chairs for the promotion ceremony, cleaning teachers classrooms, and writing letters to soldiers serving overseas.

Our thanks to Gaby Ghorbani and Pledge to Humanity for supporting the students in their work. <http://pledgetohumanity.org>

Facilities Update

We continue to move forward with plans for the construction of the new Stone Valley. The school board approved the conceptual design in May, and on June 11th teachers and community members provided input to the facilities department. Construction is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2015, and the opening is scheduled for fall 2017.

I am so proud to be a member of our learning community with teachers, students, and parents working together to provide the optimum learning environment for our children.

Thanks to all of you who contributed in some way to Stone Valley this past school year. Have a great summer, and remember to seize the learning opportunities that surface during summer activities.

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Books for the Homebound

If you or someone you know has a passion for reading and can no longer visit the library, find out more about the Danville Library's Books for the Homebound program, a free and unique library service. Trained library volunteers check out and deliver books to homebound individuals residing in their own homes or residential care facilities. Contact Sandra Paiva, Volunteer Coordinator, at the Danville Library at (925) 837-4889 for more information.

Bicycle Parking During Parade

Sustainable Danville and the San Ramon Valley High School Varsity Football Team are hosting a Bike Station (aka free, safe, valet parking for bikes!) during the Danville 4th of July Parade. Parking will be available at the Balford Building located at 675 Hartz Ave in Danville (next to Country Waffles).

Be green, eliminate the hassle of traffic and parking, and ride your bike downtown for the festivities and enjoy complimentary valet parking!





Monte Vista High School

By Janet Terranova, Principal

June 13th marked the 46th commencement for Monte Vista, and the class of 2014 was a class filled with amazing students with incredible talents. We wish them well as they start the next phase of their lives. Most of our seniors are continuing their education by going to schools across the country and some are venturing beyond our borders; some will enter the military or begin their career. This senior class has set the bar high for the next class. Thank you seniors

for an outstanding year; we will miss you.

For students the school year is filled with class work, assignments, assessments, and school and community activities. Parents try to balance a myriad of school activities, oversee their student's school work, keep an eye on their own career, and find family time. It's not an easy task. Take time this summer to enjoy a little down time. Summer is a great time to rest and rejuvenate. Whether you have students in school or not, summer means a time to relax, enjoy that after dinner ice cream cone, stay up a little later, take a dip in the ocean or pool, and enjoy BBQ feasts. Please take the time to enjoy your family and friends.

During the 2014-15 school year we will continue to refine the implementation of Common Core. To that end teachers will use the summer to improve and expand their knowledge of Common Core strategies. Many of our teachers will be taking summer courses to continue their education at colleges and universities. Some teachers work in programs sponsored by Lawrence Livermore Labs or do research at schools such as Stanford and UC Berkeley. In August SRVUSD will sponsor many workshops for staff.

As you make your summer plans, the following dates may be helpful.

- Registration Packet Pick-up ~ August 13 and 14 in the Drama Room
- Registration ~ August 18 and 19 in the Gym
- New Student Orientation ~ August 21, 8^{AM} – 1:15^{PM}
- New Student Dance ~ August 21, 7:30^{PM} – 9:30^{PM} in the Small Gym
- First Day of School ~ August 25, Minimum Day Schedule – dismissal at 12:33^{PM}

If you want to know more about Monte Vista and our activities, please visit our website at www.mvhs.schoolloop.com.



Home Composting 101

By Candace Andersen, Supervisor, Contra Costa County, District 2

I have been sitting on the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority (CCCWSA) for the past six years, and I just completed a one year tenure as chair. Most of you probably don't think about what services your waste carrier provides; you just want your garbage and recycling picked up. CCCWSA provides many consumer programs you might find helpful, including the increasingly popular and environmentally sustainable practice of home composting.

Why home compost? Organic waste material, like yard clippings and food scraps, can be given "new life" through composting. Finished compost is a great soil amendment that improves texture and adds important nutrients into the soil in your garden, creating healthy, thriving plants. It's easy and takes little time, space, and effort, and it will also save you money. According to CCCSWA, "one-third of the waste generated by Central Contra Costa County communities consists of yard and food waste." Home composting reduces the amount of waste, which is a huge benefit for the environment. With so many advantages, the question should really be, "Why not home compost?"

It's easy to get started today! CCCWSA offers residents, schools and businesses the Soilsaver Compost Bin at a discount price of \$62, which includes shipping and tax. This same bin normally retails for \$90-\$110. Bins can be purchased online at www.wastediversion.org. The Soilsaver is available at the discounted price to service area residents, schools, and businesses in Orinda, Moraga, Lafayette, Walnut Creek, Danville, and unincorporated Contra Costa County, including Alamo, Blackhawk and Diablo, and San Ramon (reimbursed to CCCSWA by the City of San Ramon). The CCCSWA and Republic Services (aka Allied Waste Services) reward single-family home residents who actively compost at home with a \$1.50 per month bill reduction.

Once you have a compost bin, you can start making your compost.

- The first step in composting is to collect your yard and kitchen waste.



San Ramon Valley High School

By Ruth Steele, Principal

High schools are like small cities. They are complex and fluid organizations. The stakeholder groups include students, parents, teachers, school staff, coaches, booster groups, district management, town management, community members, businesses, and the smallest group - school site administration.

The single biggest challenge in a community of this size is making sure that communication systems are clear and effective, and most importantly, that they

reach all stakeholders. One of the biggest challenges that I have faced over the last two years is accomplishing this goal.

We have a variety of established systems on campus for students, staff, and parents to work on issues that are raised each month - student senate, staff senate, and the priorities committee. These all work on the same premise - there are opportunities for all students, staff, and parents to submit their questions, and then a group meets monthly to answer the questions that come up. The student senate and staff senate groups were established at the start of this school year to create opportunities for transparency and open dialogue. The PTSA Priorities committee has been in place for several years and is a great forum for discussion about many items that come up.

The staff senate meeting minutes go out to staff via staff email, the student senate minutes go out to students via Schoolloop email and the priority committee minutes go out every month in the PTSA eLink. This summer, one of our main projects is looking at methods of streamlining our communication systems so that the most important information is relevant, timely, and easy to find.

The biggest challenge with email and websites is keeping things simple.

Sometimes less is more, and making sure that important information isn't lost in all the different messages coming out from different groups is one of our main goals for next year.

The best thing about SRVHS is the range of initiatives, events, programs, and opportunities for students, parents, staff, and community members. The hardest thing is making sure that everyone has all the information that they need about all the initiatives, events, programs, and opportunities that are happening.

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." George Bernard Shaw

Items like leaves, twigs, fruits, vegetables, straw, egg shells, and tea bags are perfect to use. Avoid using foods that spoil like meat or cheese.

- The second step is to combine the waste in your bin. As you mix the waste, add water.


- Last but not least, the third step is to manage your compost. Mix leaves or grass in the compost once a week. Every two weeks, turn the pile. If you'd like to add more materials to the pile, grind or cut them so they will decompose faster. The compost pile should be slightly damp, so add water or dry materials depending on the wetness. Make sure food waste is buried so flies or other creatures won't be attracted. When your compost has gotten to its final stages, it should resemble dark dirt. At this point, stop adding waste and wait a month. After, your compost should be all ready.

CCCSWA also hosts "Home Composting for Busy People!" workshops at eleven locations around Danville, Walnut Creek, and Lafayette to teach you everything you need to know to get started. Visit their website at www.wastediversion.org to view the workshop schedule. Reservations are required. For questions or to register by phone, call (925) 906-1801 x306.

My office is here to serve the residents of Contra Costa County District 2, which includes San Ramon, Danville, Alamo, Walnut Creek, Saranap, Parkmead, Lafayette, Moraga, Canyon, and Orinda. Please don't hesitate to contact us if we can provide you with additional information on this topic or on other County issues. I can be reached at SupervisorAndersen@bos.cccounty.us or (925) 957-8860.

Meals on Wheels

Seniors in your community need your support! Meals on Wheels and Senior Outreach Services has been supporting seniors in YOUR neighborhood since 1968. Two of our programs, Meals on Wheels and Friendly Visitors, rely on the support of volunteers, and we need your help now more than ever. Meals on Wheels volunteer drivers deliver meals to local homebound seniors through regular two hour shifts once per week or as substitute drivers. Friendly Visitors volunteers provide weekly one-hour companionship visits to isolated seniors. To volunteer for either program, please call (925)937-8311.



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Cinema Classics and Musical Notes

Babette's Feast

By Peggy Horn

This month's movie, *Babette's Feast* (in Danish with English subtitles), won the Best Foreign Language Film in 1989 and is based on a short story by Danish author, Isak Dinesen. With humor and tenderness the film presents two elderly sisters residing in a small Danish town. The sisters have always lived a cloistered, severely plain life in accordance with the religious beliefs of their pastor father whose sacred ways they seek to continue. Babette, down on her luck, comes to live with them and inserts some extravagance into their lives by means of a gourmet meal that she cooks especially for them and the members of the congregation. In the past, Babette has been a thrifty but apparently wonderful cook, but for this meal she pulls out all the stops. In her previous life Babette had been a chef at a famous Parisian restaurant, Café Anglais. Café Anglais actually existed during the period 1802 to 1913 and attracted the famous, the wealthy, and members of the aristocracy during the height of its popularity.

This film is beautiful, fine, and has the rare quality of being subtle. It also contains some gorgeous musical performances by the characters. Moreover, it demonstrates how beauty makes life richer and, as a consequence proves "An artist is never poor." This movie is available inexpensively for rental or purchase online.

Musical Notes

Here is a feast of music for your downloaded music collection. First up is "The Gravy Waltz," by Steve Allen, a solid piece of music that won a

Grammy Award for best jazz composition in 1963. Steve Allen is usually thought of as a comedian, but he was that AND a composer, a lyricist, a conductor, a singer, and a pianist! Next, I propose Eydie Gorme (her name says it all!) with Trio Los Panchos, singing a vintage Mexican song by composer Alvaro Carrillo entitled, "Sabor A Mi." Very nice! For a light dessert, singer-songwriter Michael Franks sings, "Popsicle Toes," from his album "The Art of Tea." All three of these are easily and inexpensively downloaded.



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Tip of the Month
By Cynthia Ruzzi
Inside Cosmetics

Have you seen the short video, “The story of cosmetics” by Annie Leonard? I was floored by the facts presented so simply. Even though I am someone who spends a lot of time reading food labels and trying to stay away from processed foods, I rarely stop to consider what my latest skin care regimen (read wrinkle reducer) might be doing to my health and that of the environment.

Keeping your family healthy should include more than focusing on what they put into their bellies. Have you considered what skincare products might do to them? At home, look at the labels of your favorite products. While you might have fun trying to pronounce words like METHYLISOTHIAZOLINONE, you might be shocked to find this chemical is linked to immunotoxicity. Hopefully, that will be enough for you to ‘wash that shampoo right out of your hair’ and look more closely at the other products you’re using. Honestly, if you can’t say it, should you spray it, slather it, or even dab it? Other parents have come to similar conclusions. Dara O’Rourke, a professor of environmental and labor policy at the UC Berkeley, was prompted to start the company GoodGuide after realizing he didn’t know what was in the sunscreen he had applied on his young daughter’s face. After checking analysis that most consumers don’t have easy access to, Dara found the lotion contained an endocrine disrupter, two skin irritants, and a carcinogen activated by sunlight. Now GoodGuide helps consumers make purchasing decisions by providing online and mobile information on the health, environmental, and social performance of products and companies. While shopping, I can use my iPhone to scan the bar codes on the items I’m considering purchasing, and the GoodGuide application gives me a score on the product’s safety. And to help teens understand the importance of non-toxic sunscreen, here’s an easy to read guide from the Environmental Working Group. http://static.ewg.org/reports/2014/teensunscreens/pdf/EWG_teensunscreens_guide_2014.pdf

The average adult woman uses 12 different products daily, and for the average teen girl that number is closer to 20. When you figure that each product averages 20 chemicals (some not required to be listed), that’s approximately 400 potential toxins our teens are exposed to daily. This means that when our teenage girls are most susceptible to chemical damage to their maturing bodies, they are exposing

themselves to higher levels of potentially harmful cosmetic ingredients. A few years ago, the Environmental Working Group did a very readable and relevant study about the burden of hormone altering chemicals on teen girls: <http://www.ewg.org/book/export/html/26953>. Hmm, if we aren’t moved to free ourselves from the beauty industry’s hold on our teens’ fragile psyches, how about protecting their physical health from unknown and hidden chemicals?

Remember, if a chemical is not ingested, then it is not reviewed rigorously by the FDA. Skincare products can use terms like ‘Herbal, Natural, and Organic’ without the legal restrictions applied to food. If you use a body lotion every day on your largest organ, your skin, you can expose yourself through absorption to a significant amount of toxins. We can start by cutting down our exposure to toxins with our water and food, but don’t forget about what we apply to our skin.

Look in your cabinets and check that the products you use aren’t harmful to you and your family. Don’t forget to check infant care products as many leading baby shampoos have formaldehyde and dioxane. And while you’re ‘cleaning house,’ please consider replacing antibacterial soaps which often contain triclosan, a carcinogen linked to developmental and reproductive toxicity. Visit GoodGuide at www.goodguide.com, or use the cosmetic safety database provided by the Environmental Working Group <http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com/> for guidance and to check what’s in your products.

Once you’ve cleaned those cabinets for your health, go one step further and make sure aren’t ‘eating’ your exfoliate. Popular cosmetic manufacturers use microbeads in facial scrubs, soaps – even toothpaste – to add an abrasive cleaning quality to their product. Microbeads are tiny bits of plastic that are designed to wash down your sink and shower drain as you use the cleaning product. Unfortunately, these tiny bits of plastic also make it past our water treatment facilities and flow by billions of particles into our local waterways. Microbeads sponge toxic chemical pollutants along their travels and become snacks for fish that are caught for human consumption. So, if you like to eat freshwater fish or seafood, there’s a pretty good chance those microbeads and their pollutants wind up in your stomach. Check whether your skin products contain microbeads by using EWG’s iPhone app, Skindeep, or visit their website, EWG.org. Have a favorite natural, home-made skincare routine? Share it with us at sustainabledanville@gmail.com or at [Facebook.com/sustainabledanville](https://www.facebook.com/sustainabledanville), and remember to visit us at <http://www.sustainabledanville.com>.

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SOLARWORLD



Energy Matters

By Mark Becker, *GoSimpleSolar*

July 4th is a wonderful holiday. From Fife and Drum Corps bands marching in the streets of Madison, Connecticut, to the Danville Parade, we're a rightfully proud nation. Winston Churchill once famously said: "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others." One day of watching our Senate in action (or lack of action) is enough to make any American disillusioned; but one day of scrutinizing how most other

nations are governed is sure to make one to agree with Winston Churchill's quote. **"More solar"** is becoming a more popular request. Solar customers, after experiencing the financial returns or increased comfort level of running the air conditioning can bring, are adding on to their existing solar PV systems. It's quite flattering to be asked to perform the work instead of the contractor that was previously chosen.

America is quickly on a path to energy independence. Renewable generation (solar, wind, biomass), natural gas and a focus on efficiency are the contributors.

Consumer alert, also known as the monthly "cringe-worthy" moment: "Canadian Solar" products are 100% "People's Republic" of China made. Who would've guessed that this and other products are so "cleverly" marketed? Some solar products claim American roots, and they are no more American than Canadian Solar is Canadian.

Unlike the stock market: Energy prices don't crash and rarely go down. Therefore, "future financial gains expected from your solar PV system can be based on past performance." There are well over 200,000 solar customers in California, and there is continued rapid growth of the industry.

Solar products are not commodities, but sometimes they are treated as such. Ask any American if they'd consider buying a Chinese car, and the answer will most likely be "No." Ask any American if they'd consider buying Chinese solar panels, and the answer may likely be "Yes." Americans hold on to their cars for an average of four years. An investment in a solar system will provide 25 years of investment returns (*assuming high quality products and installation team*). I believe there is an educational gap here; not all solar products are equal, hence they are not commodities.

As an aside: I hope it's apparent that my "China bashing" in this column is

directed to the leadership, policies, and products of the nation of the "People's Republic," *not the people*. One billion people live under the rule of oppressive governance by intimidation. Twenty-five years ago in Tiananmen Square, a struggle for freedom began, and it was oppressively put down with thousands of deaths as a result. America's fight for freedom lasted for many years. We are truly fortunate to live in this nation, and truly in debt to those who served and sacrificed their lives in the defense of freedom and the preservation of our values for the last 238 years. **The consumer protection laws** set by the Contractor's State License Board are crucial and necessary government oversight. Anyone who says that this nation needs less regulation can't be referring to our contracting industry. Unfortunately, statistics show that contractors have a lower performance and customer satisfaction rating than virtually every other profession. The most frustrating part of a construction project to which consumers are subjected are cost over-runs.

A common contractor tactic: Lure them in with a low price to land the contract, then charge more during the construction process. This widespread practice is illegal yet rampant in our state.

From the California Contractors State License Board (CSLB): "If the contract price or scope of work needs to be changed, it MUST be done with a written "Change Order," signed by the customer and contractor prior to the change, which then becomes a part of the contract."

Contractor transparency: Do a perusal of your contractor's website or construction proposal. You should be able to identify the installers and qualifications of the installers who will be working on your home, product point of origin, and license and insurance status of the contractor amongst other required information. Visit www.cslb.ca.gov.

Solar products are slowly getting more efficient. However, for maximum financial return, a solar investment must be structured for minimum risk. That means it should have *field proven technology*, not the latest in technology. Choose your installation team and products wisely for maximum return on investment.

Mark Becker is the President of GoSimpleSolar, by Semper Fidelis Construction Inc, a Danville based Solar Installation Firm (License 948715). GoSimpleSolar (www.GoSimpleSolar.com) can be reached at 925-331-8011, or info@GoSimpleSolar.com. Visit GoSimpleSolar's solar and roofing showroom at 100 Railroad Avenue, Suite B, Danville, (behind Pete's Brass Rail Restaurant). Adveritorial



John Muir House

By Linda Summers Pirkle

I recently read *John Muir, and the Ice That Started a Fire* by Kim Heacox, Lyons Press, 2014. The inside cover of the book says, "John Muir was a fascinating man who was many things: inventor, scientist, revolutionary, druid (a modern-day Celtic priest), husband, father, and shining son of the Scottish Enlightenment-both in temperament and intellect."

This year marks not only the 100th anniversary of John Muir's death; it is also the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Yosemite as a National Park and the 50th anniversary John Muir House being an historic site.

If you haven't been to John Muir's home in Martinez in the past three years, you are in for a treat. According to Lead Interpreter Ranger, Jim MacDonald, "The John Muir National Historic Site has redesigned the interpretive experience. Once the house was full of period furniture that did not belong to Mr. Muir. The National Park Service removed many of the pieces in order to make room for cases to display original archival materials and to open up the rooms for visitors. This allows the rangers to tell a story of John Muir's life and accomplishments and his time on the fruit ranch in Martinez. The displays change every six months."

I enjoyed exploring this historical house. The "scribble den," where John Muir did much of his writing, was particularly interesting. With papers spread out on the floor, a cozy chair next to the open hearth and his desk with an old fashioned ink pen, I could picture the man at work. While on my tour I learned that John Muir's youngest daughter Helen loved trains, and she decorated her room with all things having to do with trains. An exhibit about Helen told of her love of living in Martinez, and one of the reasons must have had something to do with the train route just a short distance from her home. A train trestle built in 1899 is still in use, visible from some of the windows of the house.

Just a mile from the John Muir House is the Martinez Marina. The marina has an easy walking path around the shoreline with lots of benches and picnic tables to watch the many ships passing by.

The largest bocce court in the United States, with 15 lanes, is within

walking distance of the marina. Nightly games start at 6:30^{PM}, 5^{PM} on Sunday. The waiting list to get on a team is over a year with more than 2,000 players enjoying the sport. But during the day, like the Monday my daughter and I visited, many lanes are open for play.

*For more information on the Bocce Courts, visit MartinezBocceFederation.org.

*Mount Wanda, named after John Muir's daughter, is just behind the John Muir House. It is open year round, sunrise to sunset.

*John Muir House and grounds are open Wednesday-Sunday, 10^{AM} to 5^{PM}. Allow one and a half hours to tour the house and grounds, and take time to watch the twenty minute film prior to the self guided tour. The address is 4202 Alhambra Avenue, Martinez. Their website is www.nps.gov/jomu.

* Full Moon Walks on Mount Wanda, led by a ranger, are free. Meet at the Park and Ride at the corner of Franklin Canyon Road and Alhambra Road. Start times vary according to sunset. Dates are July 12, August 10, September 9, and October 8. For more information on the Full Moon walks and Campfire programs, a community friendly event, call 925-228-8860.

Linda Summers Pirkle, travel consultant and long term Danville resident, has been arranging and leading tours for the Town of Danville for several years. Inspired by the many wonderful places to visit in the Bay Area, she organizes day trips, either for groups or for friends and family. "If it's a trip for my husband and me, my husband drives and I talk (he's a captive audience) – the perfect combination! What a great place to live, so much to see, so much to do." To share your "Quick Trips" ideas email Coverthemap@gmail.com.



Alamo Youth Show at County Fair

Alamo residents Aline and Andraya Spyrka showed their animals at the recent 2014 Contra Costa County Fair. Aline (pictured with her horse "Buster") won Grand Champion Horse. Andraya participated in the gymkhana events and showed her rabbit "Monkey." Both girls are members of Tassajara 4-H Club and have enjoyed other projects including Leadership, and Record Book.

For more information about Tassajara 4-H visit www.tassajara4h.org.



Summer Reading List

By Monica Chappell

If you're more in the mood for a staycation than vacation this summer, you can at least transport yourself in mind and spirit with a great wine read. Reading wine books will inspire you and help wrap your brain around the immense world of wine, and summer time is a perfect time to dig in. Here's a list of a few books, both new and old, that will take you to some great wine regions or at least compel you with some fascinating wine tales. Pull

up your beach chair, pour a glass of something, and crack a book open.

Books on Wine Worth a Read

***Wine and War* by Donald Kladstrup and Petie Kladstrup**

The Nazi occupation of France was a flurry of destruction. Wine is the jewel of France, and the Nazis had a lust for finery. During the 1940's, French wine-makers came together to resist and protect their fragile world.

***Napa: The Story of an American Eden* by James Conaway**

You don't have to leave the country to find a great wine tale. This book chronicles Napa Valley, the fortunes made there, and the wine dynasties that have emerged from it.

***The Billionaire's Vinegar* by Benjamin Wallace**

A novel about one of the largest scams the wine world has ever seen. The story gets interesting when an American billionaire drops over \$100,000 on a single bottle supposedly owned by Thomas Jefferson. A page-turner made for a lazy summer day, this mystery is the true story of a 1787 Château Lafite Rothschild (Bordeaux).

***Under the Tuscan Sun* by Frances Mayes**

This classic and widely read book (and movie) still holds up as a romantic read if Tuscany, Italy, is on your horizon.

Have you read any great wine books lately? Share with us at wineappreciation101@gmail.com.

The Danville-Alamo-Walnut Creek Branch of AAUW honored ten women with scholarships totaling \$10,775 at their recent installation and awards ceremony. The winners were Jennifer Ashley Horton, Sandra Camille Hui, Caitlin Kawaguchi, Kathryn Ahlberg Navarra, Jamie Lynn Noon, Elisabeth Rose Pfeiffer, Taylor Nicole Rascano, Raquel Camille Royal, Kendall A. Vignaroli, and Rebecca Yanes. The scholarships were funded through the December Holiday Home Tour which also funds 12 incoming eighth grade girls week long STEM camp at Sonoma State. Plan to attend the next Holiday Home Tour on December 12 and 13, 2014.



Pictured are five of the scholarship recipients. (L to R): Jennifer Ashley Horton, Taylor Nicole Rascano, Kathryn Ahlberg Navarra, Raquel Camille Royal and Caitlin Kawaguchi. Photo by Marian Bliss.



The San Ramon Valley Republican Women Federated proudly presented their 2014 scholarship winners (from L-R): Mikayla Felicek, DVHS, attending U. of Portland, Katie Clark, Cal High, attending Cal Poly, Isabella Salazar, DVHS, attending UC Davis; Natalie Baldacci, Las Lomas, attending UCLA. Not pictured is Carly Zenker, Monte Vista, attending Elon University. Each girl received a \$1,000 scholarship for their academic and leadership skills.

Contra Costa Cribbage Club

15-two, 15-four, a pair for six and a run of three make nine. Hearing this gibberish while seeing two opponents, a deck of cards and a slab of wood that looks like it was attacked by a crazed, but linear minded woodpecker, can only mean one thing. The game is cribbage, a two-person card game dating back to its inception in England during the early 1630s.

The Contra Costa Cribbage Club (CCCC) is one of 188 active Grass Roots clubs across the country. Club director Adrian Levy learned the game when he was 10-years old from his British father. Decades later, he's still happy to play the game and offer it to others. "Cribbage is a game of probability and psychology, much like poker. But most of all, it's a fun social game for people of all backgrounds and ages," says Levy.

The members of the CCCC can be found every Wednesday evening at 6pm "salting the crib" and avoiding the dreaded "skunk." They play a nine-game format. The CCCC offers cribbage aficionados a chance to play this great game at an affordable price, too. Members pay a \$1 entry fee to the club. Optional pools are paid out to the top 25% of the participants, as well as the high hand. The Club meets at the offices of Dudum Real Estate, 1910 Suite100, Walnut Creek. Visitors are welcome.

For further information, call Adrian Levy at 925-899-1928.



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Life in the Alamo Garden Outdoor Kitchens

By John Montgomery, ASLA, Landscape Architect

We are gearing up for what is looking to be a wonderful Alamo summer. July 4th is the pinnacle of outdoor entertaining and family BBQ's. So much of outdoor entertaining is built around cooking and eating that it has become a regular request by my clients to design outdoor kitchens into the hardscape. Our magnificent Alamo weather allows us to use the outdoors as an addition to our home. So, why not have an outdoor kitchen?

An outdoor kitchen doesn't have to be elaborate or expensive, but it can be if you wish. Outdoor kitchens range from the simple BBQ grill to a fully equipped kitchen. They are designed based on the way you entertain and cook. Starting with a simple approach, there is a huge choice of portable or prefabricated BBQ equipment. Many portables are high-quality stainless steel products made by top brand names like Weber, Viking, DCS, and Wolf. Of course, there is still room for the die-hard Weber kettle fans!

I have designed many outdoor kitchens for clients ranging from professional chefs to the guy who grills hamburgers and hot dogs. Like most kitchens in your home, the outdoor kitchen is the heart of your outdoor environment. As you think about what you want in an outdoor kitchen, many key elements must be considered such as location, frequency of use, equipment, size and space, and integration into the hardscape and landscape. Location is instrumental to how much you use your outdoor kitchen. For instance, many clients like to grill year-round, so the outdoor kitchen must be conveniently located and accessible to their indoor kitchen keeping in mind food prep, storage, and dining.

Choosing equipment is very important. Depending on your desired level of expertise, the market offers numerous choices and price points. First, consider the grill, the center piece to your outdoor kitchen. There are too many choices to mention in this article. Briefly, grills range from 18" to 60", using charcoal, natural gas, or propane, and ranging in price from \$1,000 to \$13,000. The low-end uses charcoal and the high-end grill made by Kalama-zoo is a hybrid that uses gas, charcoal, or wood depending on your grilling needs. Next, having a side burner for boiling water, sautéing, and steaming is a good choice so you can cook your entire meal outdoors. Other cooking equipment includes lobster pots, wok burners, and counter top pizza ovens. Full-size pizza ovens are also a great addition. To keep things on the cool side, outdoor refrigerators of various configurations are available including



wine fridges, keg-a-rators, ice makers, and now freezers. Storage is also an important aspect to the design of your outdoor kitchen. Again, all sorts of storage is available from stainless cupboards, drawer units, warming drawers, and complete cabinet units. Counter top space and materials are also an important consideration. A raised bar with stools, a sink with hot and cold



running water, and electrical needs are also things to think of.

The size and space of your outdoor kitchen depends on frequency and level of entertaining. Your love of cooking and entertaining will determine the size and space you need. One of my clients, a professional chef, prefers to use his outdoor kitchen over his indoor one. Designing the location so that the kitchen is located in the heart of the hardscape is very important. It is a social place connected to the dining area, patio, pool, and garden. They can be enclosed in a cabana or under an open trellis. Other essentials to consider are wood burning pizza ovens, fireplaces, fire pits, and a living room. What you can imagine can be designed and built!

A hot tip from your local Landscape Architect: Adding an outdoor kitchen to your new or existing hardscape requires creativity, design, planning, and budget experience.

Gardening Quote of the Month: "Nothing would be more tiresome than eating and drinking if God had not made them a pleasure as well as a necessity." ~Voltaire

If you would like me to write on any particular subject, email your ideas to jmontgomery@jm-la.com. For design ideas, visit www.jm-la.com. Advertorial



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How Much are your Trees Really Worth?

By Blaine Brende & Joe Lamb

With the world in economic and ecological turmoil, it pays to take a deep breath and consider the real value of your assets. It's best to start this exercise close to home because for

most Americans their largest asset is their home. A surprisingly large contribution—between 8 and 19%¹ — to the value of your home comes from your trees, shrubs, and other landscape plants. If your house is worth \$500,000, that places the value of your plants at between \$40,000 and \$90,000. Your trees deserve care commensurate with the value they add to your home's portfolio.

Trees, of course, have value far beyond real estate. Here's a quick tour of values economists give for urban trees:

Trees add to home values and thereby form part of the tax base. In so doing trees help fund schools, fire protection services, and police.

Trees work to clean the air. In the process of photosynthesis, trees absorb pollutants and even convert harmful chemicals, like nitrogen oxides and airborne ammonia, into benign forms.

Trees act to reduce local tax rates by reducing infrastructure costs. Trees absorb rain and slow the speed at which storm water accumulates, thereby helping to prevent flooding and the need to install larger storm drains.

Trees not only filter pollution, they help prevent it. Shade from trees can reduce air conditioning needs by as much as 30%, and trees planted to intercept prevailing winds can reduce heating needs significantly. "Projections suggest that 100 million additional mature trees in US cities (three trees for every unshaded single family home) could save over \$2 billion in energy costs per year."²

Trees also help prevent car pollution. In the Sacramento area, an astounding 16% of air pollution comes from cars parked in the sun. Shade from trees greatly reduces the loss of gas, thereby reducing air pollution.

Trees aid healing. When hospital rooms have views of trees, patients heal at a measurably faster rate. Trees help us fulfill Dorothy Day's maxim: create a world in which it is easier to be nice to each other. Studies find that trees in public housing neighborhoods reduce levels of fear and decrease aggressive behavior; and students with ADHD develop more self-discipline when they play in natural settings.

Berkeley calculates that for every \$1.00 the city spends on planting and pruning city trees, its citizens reap \$1.40 in measurable benefits; for Sacramento the return is \$1.80, and for New York City an astounding \$5.00 is the return for every dollar spent. The value added to pruning and planting trees on your own property is higher than that for street trees because trees have a real effect on real estate prices.

Overestimating the value of trees to the entire planet is impossible: how can you put a price on the continuation of human life? If too many trees are stripped from the planet, then tipping points in the carbon cycle are crossed making global warming spin out of control... and making the world too hot for human life. Our Earth is small, and global warming makes it ever smaller. The easy division between what is global and what is local no longer holds: a ton of carbon dioxide from burning rainforests in Borneo heats the air as much as a ton of carbon dioxide from the tail pipes of commuter traffic on I580. We are all part of the problem. We are all part of the solution.

Trees play a role in all three strategies to fight global warming. Trees help reduce energy use, and they may someday become a source of renewable biofuels. We can protect and restore rainforests and other carbon sinks. Through its work in the Borneo Project, Brende and Lamb works hard to leverage local support for the protection of rainforests. Closer to home we can all help with strategic planting of urban trees to sequester carbon, to reduce heat island effects, and to lower energy consumption. The dividends far outstrip the costs of caring for trees as a necessary part of the 'green economy.'

Like other living beings, trees do require care. With people it costs less to avoid getting sick than to pay for a cure. The same is true with trees. Quality care improves the health of your trees, extends their lifespan, and increases their beauty. Quality tree work pays dividends to you and to the planet.

If you need help, do not hesitate to give us a call for advice or to do the work. At Brende and Lamb, we have 20 years of experience balancing the aesthetics of your trees and shrubs and maintaining your screening needs. If your trees need a little TLC, please call 510-486-TREE (8733) or email us at bl@brendelamb.com for a free estimate. Additionally, go to our website www.brendelamb.com to see before and after pictures, client testimonials, and work in your neighborhood.

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1. <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/01/090119210532.htm>

2. http://www.treefolks.org/store_biglist.asp

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Clip Notes

By Jody Morgan

On July 4th, 1776 the “Continental Colors” featured thirteen red and white stripes with the British Union Jack in the upper left hand corner. Our Continental Congress did not adopt a thirteen-star flag until almost a year after the Declaration of Independence was signed. The resolve drafted by the Marine Committee on June 14, 1777 called for the new flag to have “thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, and thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation.”

The design attributed to Betsey Ross was only one of many used in the earliest flags. With no official pattern to follow, American patriots placed stars in a variety of arrangements as they hastily pieced together materials immediately at hand. Although blue cloth imported from England would probably have been dyed using indigo (*Indigofera tinctoria*), fabric loomed in the colonies was still frequently dyed using woad (*Isatis tinctoria*). The plants come from different families, but yield the same pigment-producing chemical.

Woad was listed among the first seeds shipped to New England in the 17th century. The Herb Society quotes a document dated 1629: “Articles to be sent to New England by the Massachusetts Bay Company: vines, cereals, fruit seeds, woad seed, saffron heads, liquorice seed, madder roots, hop-roots.” Madder, responsible for dyeing the red fabric used in the first flags of the United States, seems a strange substance to be sending to Puritans famous for their drab attire. But madder used in combination with woad yields a reliable black.

Seventeenth century English scholar Thomas Fuller described woad as “the stock whereon other colours are grafted.” Indeed, woad was considered the “Universal Dye” of the Middle Ages because combined with other dyestuffs it creates red, violet, purple, and green as well as black and blue. Woad dye utilized for the “Hunt of the Unicorn” tapestries created in 1495-1505 still remains true blue.

Cultivated as early as 10,000 years ago, woad provided pigment for painting pottery and people as well as dyeing fabric. By the 13th century, processing woad

was a major European industry. Because the crop exhausted a field in two years, woad growers originally lived a transient life, renting new properties biennially. Finally someone realized that crop rotation would allow farmers to settle in one place. An acre devoted to woad produced a ton of leaves in a single season.

During the 1580s, English Parliament restricted the amount of acreage that could be allocated to growing woad. Because raising woad was six times as profitable as growing grains, farmers were dedicating insufficient land to comestible crops. Elizabeth I repealed the law in 1601, but forbid the sowing of woad within five miles of her royal residences. She was so offended by the odor of fermenting woad, she ordered that during her travel throughout the countryside, her procession should avoid coming too near any town engaged in processing the leaves.

During the days when woad production was a flourishing industry, the leaves were ground between large wooden rollers pulled round and round by horses. The pulp was set in heaps to drain and then kneaded and rolled into balls, each two-handfuls in size. The balls were dried on racks and then ground into powder.

Fermentation of the powder was done in a structure called a couching house with brick-lined walls and a brick or stone floor. Piled two to three feet deep and repeatedly dampened with water, the mass fermented for nine weeks. Turning the stinking heap each day was a most unpleasant task. The resulting dyestuff, one-tenth the bulk of the original leaf-mass, was marketed in 150-200 pound packages.

Recipes exist for making small batches of woad for home dyeing. Each plant yields about half a pound of leaves a season and two pounds of leaves are needed to dye four ounces of yarn. Seed catalogues continued to carry woad routinely until 1850 and you can still get it from specialty sources.

However, woad is currently most unwelcome in at least eleven western states where it is characterized as a noxious weed. Also called dyer’s woad, this aggressive member of the mustard family is thought to have arrived in California about 1900 as a stowaway in a shipment of alfalfa seed. The tough taproot, which can reach five feet underground, is balanced above ground by a tough, yellow flowering, four-foot stalk that runs competitors off the range. As a biennial or short-lived perennial, woad assures preservation of its species by casting copious quantities of seed everywhere.

Labyrinth *continued from front page*

The proposal envisions commissioning internationally known labyrinth artist Marty Kermeeen, whose handcrafted labyrinths are installed throughout the U.S. (his installations can be viewed at www.labyrinthsinstone.com).

The labyrinth would be installed on the unimproved area behind the Magee House at the park, close to the creek and next to the grassy area across the path from the gazebo. The labyrinth committee worked with Danville Parks maintenance supervisor Dave Casteel to come up with the best location that would not impact other park activities and would be economical to install. The SRV United Methodist Church will sign an agreement with the Town of Danville to maintain the labyrinth so that there will be no ongoing cost to the Town or the MAC. Hap Magee Ranch Park is uniquely located in both Alamo and Danville, and the two communities share the expenses for the park equally.

The photo rendering shows an Eleven-Circuit Medieval Labyrinth. The most well-known labyrinth of this kind is in Chartres Cathedral in France and has been replicated at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. The labyrinth committee hopes this labyrinth will serve the community as not only a lovely piece of artwork for Hap Magee Ranch Park, but also as a place of meditation, inspiration, and peace for all the visitors who enjoy walking in the park. Labyrinths like this are often also used by the public as a spectacular site for weddings and other special events.

A labyrinth is an ancient pattern repeated throughout many cultures. Labyrinth designs are found on pottery, tablets, and tiles that date back 5,000 years. Many of these patterns are based on spirals and circles mirrored in nature. In Native American tradition, the labyrinth is identical to the Hopi Medicine Wheel and Man in the Maze. The Celts described the labyrinth as the Never Ending Circle. The most well-known labyrinths were installed in Christian churches in medieval Europe and symbolized pilgrimages for those unable to undertake an actual pilgrimage. One feature labyrinths have in common is that they have one path that winds in a circuitous way to the center.

The labyrinth committee consists of SRVUMC co-pastor Kathi McShane, staff member Devon Drake, and Alamo residents Sylvia Benzler, Dory Schramm, Kate Johnson, and Sharon Burke as well as Danville resident Cathy Colman. With the approvals in place, now the Committee will begin the task of raising the money to craft and install the labyrinth. One hundred thousand



Photo rendering of proposed location of labyrinth at Hap Magee Park.

dollars is needed, and to date the church has collected \$23,000 in donations from friends of the Schramm family.

Anyone interested in making the labyrinth dream a reality can send donations made payable to SRVUMC, with “Will Schramm” written in the memo line of your check. Mail checks to San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church, 902 Danville Blvd. Alamo, CA 94507.

Labyrinth fundraising events have been planned for this summer. If all the funds are raised by September 1, the seven-week process of hand crafting the pavers can begin, and labyrinth artist Marty Kermeeen will be engaged to build and install it over the winter, when park usage is lighter than in other seasons.

August 1 – Candlelight Labyrinth Walk, at San Ramon Valley UMC’s Wesley Center, 7 – 10^{pm}. All welcome, donations accepted.

August 2 – Yoga on the Labyrinth Benefit with Howard VanEs, at San Ramon Valley UMC’s Wesley Center, 9:30^{am}. Previous yoga experience required, and space is limited to 30 participants. Bring a yoga mat. For more information or to register, call Devon Drake at SRVUMC at (925) 837-5243 x109.

August 18 – The Will Schramm Memorial Golf Tournament, Dinner & Auction, at Round Hill Country Club. For more information or to register for the golf tournament, call Sharon or Bob Burke at 934-9282.



Wanted: Great People

By Evan Corstorphine, Portable CIO

When I founded Portable CIO in 2001, I knew I could not do it alone. From the start, my idea was to surround myself with like-minded technical people so that we could build a remarkable company. I never wanted or intended to be the sole 'guy with a screwdriver' going around fixing computers! I've done plenty of that in my career, but I can't build a company if I'm the lead technician, no matter how fun it may be at times. "One-Man-Bands," or what we call the lone PC consultants we come across, usually don't survive, and we've seen all of those we've met fall by the wayside over the last decade. They fail because the lone-consultant business model is not financially or practically sustainable for the kind of work we do. They cannot charge enough every hour to make enough to stay in business, and they do not have the depth they need for the breadth of problems we typically face. And usually, they're not businessmen, they're technicians, so they only figure this out when they're in over their head. I knew from the start that this business requires a team, nothing less. Nobody can know everything or do everything that is required to make a company successful. I had my little spreadsheet and a business plan, and it was in black and white what it was going to take. So, my philosophy has been to find people with great character who happen to have a technical bent, people who have big ears, small mouths, and small egos. We train them in the ways of doing what we do. It's worked very well. Of course our staff members are smart, but first and foremost they're nice, friendly, and interesting people.

In the thirteen years since our founding, we've had many employees, and only a couple that didn't work out, and they didn't last very long. I'm proud to say that none of our long-term people have left for anything less than fantastic, life-affirming reasons that everyone on our team completely supported. In other words, they left to grow, because it was time, not because they hated working here or something was intolerable, and I'm proud of that. It's always been my goal to create a work culture that people enjoy and are proud to be a part of, somewhere they want to be.

Fast forward to now, July 2014, when we find ourselves in a growth stage, and we need more like-minded staff to help us get to the next level. Specifically, I am looking for a senior consultant to work in the field and a person to work inside our office managing the bench/helpdesk workload. These are important roles, ones that touch clients every day.

So, here's the pitch. If you know someone who has the temperament, the customer service attitude, the natural inquisitiveness, and the experience that would make them someone YOU would like to have come to your home or business to help you, we'd like to meet them. Unfortunately, this time we are not in a stage where we can accommodate interns or youngsters looking for summer work. We're looking for full-time, career-minded people who want to join a company to build a technical consulting career, who want to be in one place for at least a couple years, probably more. There will definitely be more time later for the "nephew who likes to build PC's..." and who needs a summer job.

Because the situations we face can be so technically diverse, one of my staff thought it would be a good idea to create an employment questionnaire for every applicant to answer. I thought it was a great idea. He wrote down some questions pulled directly from situations he's faced, and voila, we created a great vehicle for both ascertaining someone's experience and for sharing the kind of work we perform. Through the questionnaire we can get a glimpse into the applicant's personality and problem solving methodology. And through the questions, the applicant can get a glimpse of what a day in the life of a Portable CIO employee is like and the breadth of issues we face.

In the end, our business is based on and blessed by relationships with people like you. I'm grateful for the opportunity to sit here thirteen years after conceiving this venture and be asking you to send me your best and brightest. I can't promise anyone more than an opportunity to work hard, play hard, learn a ton, and hopefully make life-long friends along the way.

As always, if you have any computer, networking, or infrastructure problems, contact Portable CIO at 925-552-7953, or email our friendly staff at helpdesk@theportablecio.com. We'd love to help.

Advertorial

11 Critical Home Inspection Traps to be Aware of Weeks Before Listing Your Home for Sale

Alamo - According to industry experts, there are over 33 physical problems that will come under scrutiny during a home inspection when your home is for sale. A new report has been prepared which identifies the 11 most common of these problems, and what you should know about them before you list your home for sale.

Whether you own an old home or a brand new one, there are a number of things that can fall short of requirements during a home inspection. If not identified and dealt with, any of these 11 items could cost you dearly in terms of repair. That's why it's critical that you read this report before you list your home. If you wait until the building inspector flags these issues for you, you will almost certainly experience costly delays in the close of your home sale or, worse, turn prospective buyers

away altogether. In most cases, you can make a reasonable pre-inspection yourself if you know what you're looking for, and knowing what you're looking for can help you prevent little problems from growing into costly and unmanageable ones.

To help home sellers deal with this issue before their homes are listed, a free report entitled "11 Things You Need to Know to Pass Your Home Inspection" has been compiled which explains the issues involved.

To hear a brief recorded message about how to order your FREE copy of this report, call toll-free 1-866-265-1682 and enter 2001. You can call any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Get your free special report NOW to learn how to ensure a home inspection doesn't cost you the sale of your home.

This report is courtesy of J. Rockcliff Realtors #01763819. Not intended to solicit buyers or sellers currently under contract. Copyright © 2013

Alamo Police Statistics

There were a total of 25 total crimes reported during the month of May in Alamo which included alarm calls, grand theft-shoplifting, misdemeanor battery on a peace officer, four residential burglaries, corporal injury of spouse, one call of disturbing the peace, identity theft, one medical call, two requests for outside assistance, petty theft from a vehicle, possession of paraphernalia, one rape, one service to citizen, an arrest warrant, and a violation of a domestic violence court order.

Alamo Safeway was the site of a grand theft shoplifting operation. After several months of investigating an incident that occurred in February, the alleged suspect was recently identified. Through the investigation it was discovered that it appeared the subject was responsible for other shoplifting cases in the Alamo Safeway as well as other jurisdictions.

Three residential burglaries took place on Hemme Ave, Livorna Heights Rd., and Cervato Circle. So far there are no witnesses or leads to any of the incidents. Items taken include electronics and jewelry.

Please remember to take precautions to prevent similar issues in your own homes and neighborhoods.



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Is Your Living Trust a Bomb Ticking Silently?

By Robert J. Silverman

Major new Federal Estate Tax legislation was enacted in January 2013. You may have heard or read that these tax rules changed, but it's not likely that the new rules may have transformed your existing living trust into a bomb ticking silently.

I wrote about this last February, but the topic is so important that I decided to cover it again. First, let's highlight the good news and bad news for married couples who have a type of living trust typically referred to as a "formula," "A-B," or "A-B-C" trust. You may not know whether you have this type of trust, but there's a reasonable chance you do since this structure has been common for many years.

The bad news is that if you are a married couple with such a trust and you make no changes to the document, the bomb will explode. The good news is that it's fairly easy and painless for you to avoid the explosion; however, you must take affirmative action to change your trust **before the first spouse dies**.

Prior to January 2013: Formula trusts have been extremely popular for married couples during the last two to three decades. The reason is that this structure enabled married couples to legally eliminate or minimize Estate Tax (with a top tax rate of 55% during much of the last few decades) when such tax might otherwise be imposed if the surviving spouse died with more than a certain threshold amount of net assets. The amount exempt from Estate Tax liability ("exemption") has varied greatly over the years, but it was as low as \$600,000 through much of the nineties. Accordingly, many couples were exposed to potential Estate Tax liability.

Formula trusts dictate that assets are to be split up into at least two pots (sub-trusts) after the first spouse dies. By segregating the assets into A & B sub-trusts, two exemptions – one applicable to the deceased spouse's assets and one applicable to the surviving spouse's assets – could be used.

Alternatively, if a couple's trust was structured as a one pot trust, in which all of the assets of the first spouse to die were kept in the same pot as the assets of the surviving spouse, only one exemption (that of the surviving spouse) could be used; the exemption of the first spouse to die was lost.

So, married couples who did not have a formula trust were potentially exposing their children and/or other loved ones to tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in unnecessary Federal Estate Tax liability.

After December 2012: The exemption is now \$5.34 Million and is indexed annually for inflation. More importantly, a new feature called "portability"

www.yourmonthypaper.com
enables married couples to use two full exemptions without splitting the assets into two separate pots after the first spouse dies. Consequently, **a huge number of married couples no longer need a formula Trust for Estate Tax reasons!**

Nevertheless, you might ask what harm there is in just keeping your A-B trust? What is this bomb that I've stated is ticking? Perhaps using the ticking bomb analogy is overly dramatic, but there are quite important, yet not commonly understood, disadvantages of a formula trust. Some of the primary disadvantages are: a) they are typically much more expensive and inconvenient to administer and manage after the first spouse dies; b) an attorney is generally needed to help the surviving spouse comply with complicated rules and procedures in allocating and transferring assets into their respective sub-trusts; c) separate records and accounts are required for each sub-trust; d) a separate tax return must be prepared and filed for the 'B' Trust *every year of the surviving spouse's life*; and e) possible extra income tax liability will be incurred on the sale of assets in the "B" sub-trust that appreciate after the first spouse dies.

It is noteworthy that there are still some non-tax reasons that may warrant having a formula trust, particularly for many blended families. In any event, the newer Estate Tax rules provide a golden opportunity for married couples to seek counsel from an experienced estate planning attorney about the pros and cons of their existing trust structure. Unfortunately, ignoring the subject and taking no action at all may not be as harmless as you might think.

Mr. Silverman is an attorney with R. Silverman Law Group, 1855 Olympic Blvd., Suite 240, Walnut Creek, CA 94596; (925) 705-4474, rsilverman@rsilvermanlaw.com, www.silvermanlaw.com.

* Estate Planning * Trust Administration & Probate

* Real Estate * Business

This article is intended to provide information of a general nature, and is not intended nor should it be relied upon as legal, tax and/or business advice. Readers should obtain and rely upon specific advice only from their own qualified professional advisors. This communication is not intended or written to be used, for the purpose of: i) avoiding penalties under the Internal Revenue Code; or ii) promoting, marketing, or recommending to another party any matters addressed herein.


R. Silverman
LAW GROUP

Advertorial

Hearing Loss Association

Come to meetings of the Diablo Valley Chapter of Hearing Loss Association of America at 7pm on the 1st Wednesday of the month at the Walnut Creek United Methodist Church located at 1543 Sunnyvale Ave., Walnut Creek Education Bldg., Wesley Room. Meeting room and parking are at back of church. All are welcome. Donations are accepted. An assistive listening system is available for T-coils, and most meetings are captioned. Contact HLAADV@hearinglossdv.org or (925) 264-1199 or www.hearinglossdv.org for more information.

Is Food a Problem for You?

Overeaters Anonymous offers a fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience and mutual support, are recovering from compulsive overeating. This is a 12-step program. The free meetings are for anyone suffering from a food addiction including overeating, under-eating, and bulimia. The group meets Wednesdays at 6PM at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lafayette. Visit www.how-ooa.org for more information.

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Top College Funding Mistakes Parents Make

By Peter Waldron In conjunction with Sagemark Consulting, a division of Lincoln Financial Advisors, a registered investment advisor

Paying for your children's college educations should actually be placed quite low on the totem pole of financial priorities. Why? There are several reasons for this, such as the availability of tools to pay for college, such as financial aid in the forms of student loans, grants, and other programs where loans are forgiven in exchange for public service in low-income communities. But ultimately, it's also because focusing too much on college savings can jeopardize a family's overall financial planning strategy.

First Things First

Some family financial needs may be a good thing, like college for other children, or they can be tragic, like long-term care costs for the parents themselves or medical expenses for grandparents. Devoting too many resources to college savings can cut into preparing for inevitabilities such as retirement which—unlike financing college—can't be funded by loans.

Since college costs these days are skyrocketing, how should parents prioritize their saving and investing plans? Consider adhering to the following priorities, in this order:

- **Establish an emergency fund.** It's critical to establish an emergency fund with at least six months worth of living expenses. This is a key building block for meeting a family's basic financial needs. After all, what if you have a job change or you get laid off? If you don't have six months worth of expenses to fall back on, you can't go into that 529 account and take money out without a penalty and taxes.

- **Fully fund employer-sponsored retirement plans.** A major mistake many people make is reducing contributions to their employer-sponsored retirement plan in favor of investments toward a child's education. Instead, the priority should be in making as large a contribution as possible into a 401(k) or 403(b) plan. Doing so not only enables you to take advantage of any employer match available, but it also provides potentially significant tax advantages.

- **Take care of insurance needs.** Too many parents make the mistake of ratcheting back on life or disability income insurance in order to save for a child's education. But if something bad should happen, both college and a family's most pressing needs may be in jeopardy. If the primary breadwinner isn't working and doesn't have income coming in for a long period of time, then college is, in many cases, out of the question. Parents should save for college while simultaneously retaining insurance coverage.

- **Don't forget IRAs.** It's crucial to continue funding both your Traditional and Roth IRAs as much as possible. Roth IRAs are particularly good in case parents want to use some portion of those assets for college, because in some circumstances, after five years the contributions into a Roth IRA can be withdrawn income tax and penalty-free. Roth IRA earnings taken prior to age 59 ½, may be subject to a 10% federal tax penalty and possibly state income taxes.

While financing all or part of your child's college education is a worthy goal, it's critical to keep your family's overall financial picture in mind when making financial planning decisions.

Please contact Peter Waldron to schedule a complimentary review of your financial situation, (925) 659-0383 or peter.waldron@lfg.com.

Peter T. Waldron, California Insurance License #0E47827, is a registered representative of Lincoln Financial Advisors, a broker/dealer, member SIPC, and offer investment advisory service through Sagemark Consulting, a division of Lincoln Financial Advisors Corp., a registered investment advisor, Spectrum Wealth Partners, 3000 Executive Parkway, Ste 400, San Ramon, CA 94583. Insurance offered through Lincoln Marketing and Insurance Agency, LLC and Lincoln Associates Insurance Agency, Inc. and other fine companies. This information should not be construed as legal or tax advice. You may want to consult a tax advisor regarding this information as it relates to your personal circumstance. The content of this material was provided to you by Lincoln Financial Advisors Corp. for its representatives and their clients.

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Hospice Volunteers Needed

Hospice of the East Bay is seeking volunteers to assist Hospice patients and their caregivers. Opportunities include:

- Licensed Hair Stylists to offer hair cuts and styling
- Certified Massage Therapists to provide massage therapy
- Mobile Notaries to witness the signing of important documents
- Bereavement Support Volunteers to provide support to family members after their loved one has died
- Patient Support Volunteers to provide companionship and practical assistance

To apply for free training, call Hospice of the East Bay at (925) 887-5678 and ask for the Volunteer Department, or email volunteers@hospiceeastbay.org.

Established in 1977, Hospice of the East Bay is a not-for-profit agency that helps people cope with end of life by providing medical, emotional, spiritual, and practical support for patients and families, regardless of their ability to pay.

To learn more or to make a donation of time or money, please contact (925) 887-5678 or visit www.hospiceeastbay.org.

Group Helps People Cope with Death of Pets

When you lose your pet, you often feel like a part of you is lost. The death of your beloved animal companion is one of the most difficult losses you may ever feel. This loss is sometimes made more painful by society's seeming lack of support for pet grief.

Hospice of the East Bay and the Tony La Russa Animal Rescue Foundation is offering a support group where participants can share memories and feelings and talk to others who truly understand and care. Meetings will be held the first Tuesday of each month from noon - 1:30^{PM} at the Tony La Russa Animal Rescue Foundation, 2890 Mitchell Drive, Walnut Creek.

For further information and/or to register, please call Bereavement Services at Hospice of the East Bay (925) 887-5681. Pre-registration is required.

Hospice of the East Bay Bereavement Services are provided free of charge to all community members in need. However, donations are greatly appreciated.



Alamo Farmer's Market Opens Sunday, July 27th!

By Roger Smith, President

All Bay Farmers' Market Association and Bay Fresh Producer are pleased to announce the opening of the Alamo Certified Farmers' Market on **Sunday, July 27th at 9^{AM} until 1^{PM}** in Alamo Plaza.

There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony to open the market with our local Supervisor, Candace Andersen, present to officiate. Please join us!

Bill Harlow of All Bay Farmers' Market notes that Aprylle Gilbert, a singer/musician from Campbell, will be performing at the opening. A number of vendors will be present, including a French bakery artisan pastry chef from Ma Petite Cheri Bakeshop, Julie Deck from 3 French Hens Artisan Jams and Jellies, which uses local organic fruits from the farmers markets to create her jams, jellies and rubs. Please visit www.3FrenchHens.org for more information. Make sure to stop at the booth of one of our local olive oil producers, Belle Olio De' Oliva from Byron in eastern Contra Costa County. Want more? BBQ from Meyer's Fine Foods will also be present.

FYI - Harlow has a genuine interest in the sustainability of small family farms, the "heart and soul" of California Agriculture and the "Buy Fresh – Buy Local" movement that Alice Waters, has supported and popularized and wants Alamo to share in this experience.

You should expect to find a large selection of locally grown fruits and vegetables at the Alamo Farmers' Market because it will be the start of the peak of the growing season. Every kind of vegetable you can imagine that grows in California will be present, so please make sure you are as well!

Welcome and Learn About Your AIA New and Returning Board Members

Don Copland, 30+ year Alamo resident, realtor, past AIA Planning committee member and current AIA Public Safety Committee Member.

Daniel DeRensis, 15 year Alamo resident, Business Executive and Consultant, AIA Board Member and Community Affairs Committee Member.

Sandy Fink, 40 year Alamo resident, homemaker, mother, community

Summer Fire Hazards – Tips for a Fire Safe Summer

By San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District

Summer is here along with warm temperatures, time with family and friends, picnics, and backyard barbecues. It is also a time of year that we complete outdoor projects and make improvements to our homes. Some of these typical summer activities can put our homes and family at risk for fire. San Ramon Valley Firefighters want all residents to enjoy a summer of fun, not a summer of fire. Keep the following tips in mind to reduce your risk.

Landscape mulch and bark fires

Valley residents take great pride in their outdoor spaces and take special care to plant shrubs, ground covers, and flowering plants to beautify their homes. Did you know that the mulch or bark that you place in your planting beds can cause a fire or can help a fire spread more rapidly?

Thousands of mulch fires are reported annually throughout the United States. Mulch fires occur year-round but primarily in the summer when the temperatures are higher and there is little rainfall. As a result, landscaping materials become dried out, allowing for easy ignition. Keep the following in mind when it come to mulch and bark around your home.

- Provide proper clearance for electric devices such as decorative lights by following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Keep landscaped mulch beds moist, if possible.
- Use noncombustible mulch such as rock or pea gravel around the gas meter and next to the combustible portions of the structure.
- Use only the manufacturer's recommended size/wattage for yard light bulbs.
- Use only electrical devices and cords listed for outdoor use, and follow the manufacturer's specifications.
- Consider replacing landscaping mulch with decorative stone.

Oily Rags – Hang them to Dry

Be cautious when disposing of oily rags after using them to complete wood-

proponent, regular meeting attendee at AIA, MAC, Tri-Valley Transportation Council, Association for Preservation of Danville Blvd. and, when active, the San Ramon Planning Commission.

Mike Gibson, 29 year Alamo resident, Architect/Planner, current AIA Transportation Committee Chair, past AIA Board President and Planning Committee Chair, past Vice President San Ramon Valley Planning Commission, 2005 Alamo Citizen of the year.

Stephen Goodman, 33 year Alamo resident, Retired School Administrator, AIA Board member and past Chair of R-7A (Parks and Recreation Committee).

Ken Hoffman, 30+ year Alamo resident, attorney, retired Bank of America executive, current President of Upper Ridgewood HOA.

Valerie Schooley, 17 year Alamo resident, Attorney, current President of Round Hill Estates North HOA.

Roger Smith, 22 year Alamo resident, businessman, current AIA President, past AIA Planning Committee Chair, 2011 Alamo Citizen of the Year.

Jim Wadsworth, 14 year Alamo resident, Construction/Builder, retired, current Board Member and current AIA Community Affairs Committee Chair.

Alicia Watson, 22 year Alamo resident, retired educator, current AIA Secretary, past Chair of Alamo Beautification Advisory Committee with service on Alamo Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and Alamo Roads Advisory Committee.

We want to say "THANK YOU" to each of you for your interest in AIA and your willingness to volunteer your valuable time to preserve our Alamo community, the place we love to live!

AIA's 2014 Annual Report And Membership Drive

Now in its 59th year, AIA, a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization, has the longest history of serving our community and helping shape it into "Alamo - the place where we love to live"! Since 1955, Alamo residents have been joining the Alamo Improvement Association and working in support of AIA's mission statement, which is to "preserve the semi-rural character of Alamo."

As Board President, I want to thank all of our many volunteers, both past and present, for their efforts over the last 59 years in making Alamo into the wonderful community that it is today. Please visit our website at www.Alamoca.org for information on AIA, articles of interest to Alamo residents, membership forms, and more.

Please review your AIA 2014 Annual Report, then complete your membership form, and return to AIA to our P.O.Box 156, Alamo, CA. 94507

finishing or other household projects, such as staining your deck or refinishing your patio furniture. Properly drying the rags prior to throwing them away will eliminate the possibility of fire through spontaneous combustion. According to the NFPA on average over 14,000 spontaneous combustion fires are reported each year and cause millions of dollars in damage. If you are planning a staining project, please protect you and your family by following these simple steps.

- Anytime you have an oily rag left over from a project, hang it up to dry, outdoors. You can use a clothesline or fence. Be sure to hang each rag individually, and avoid piling them on top of each other.
- If you must dry oily rags indoors, be sure to keep them away from heat sources such as water heaters or furnaces.
- As always, follow the manufacturer's directions on proper use, storage, and disposal.

Don't let the BBQ burn on...

Backyard barbecues are a summer staple. Make sure that the fun does not lead to fire by ensuring the coals are cooled and disposed of properly. The United States Fire Administration urges you to douse used coals with plenty of water and stir them to ensure that the fire is completely out. Never place used coals in plastic, paper, or wooden containers. Choose a metal container instead.

San Ramon Valley Firefighters appreciate your assistance in keeping our community safe and helping to reduce the risk of fire in the Valley. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Fire Prevention Division at (925) 838-6600.

The San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District is an internationally-accredited special district that provides all-risk fire, rescue, and emergency medical services to the communities of Alamo, Blackhawk, the Town of Danville, Diablo, the City of San Ramon, the southern area of Morgan Territory and the Tassajara Valley, in Northern California (Contra Costa County). The District's service area encompasses approximately 155 square miles and serves a population of 170,000.



What are You Waiting for?

By Michelle Brown, Gumsaba Boot Camp

Are you living in a state of procrastination when it comes to your health and wellness? Whether you want to lose weight, eat better, exercise, or become a triathlete, the time to start is now. You are the director of your destiny. There is great power and responsibility in that. So, what are you waiting for?

Goal setting is tricky and accomplishing a major goal is not easy. It takes effort, time, motivation, and a great plan of action to make a dream come true. You have had a your habits for many years, maybe even decades. Don't expect an overnight miracle. Change happens with consistent mindful effort. Lasting change takes a special approach that requires patience and courage. Your health is your greatest asset, without good health, life is a struggle much greater than any goal you could set your sights on.

So, lets get to work...

First, take a good look at where you are in relationship to your goal. To set yourself up for success, be completely honest with yourself about what is stopping you from progress. Take a good look at your life. What habits do you have now that are not serving you anymore? It's time to let go of those things that are weighing you down. For example, if you find yourself eating in front of the TV at night and your goal is weight loss, maybe it is time to turn off the TV a few nights per week (or more) and have a new evening habit that keeps you busy like reading, knitting, or walking. It may sound too simple, but if you spend two or more hours a night on the couch watching TV, you are losing 14 hours per week to an electric box! What if you spent that 770 hours per year developing the person you want to be? Your time is far more valuable than that!

Next, any negative internal dialogue needs to go and be replaced with positive action. Positive thinking is powerful and it is the only path to positive results. Remember this: you are what you think you are and what you think you are not. So, if you keep saying "I'm fat," let that habit GO. Start looking at your body as the beautiful amazing gift that it is. Many people in the world are paralyzed, and I'd bet a good percentage of them would give anything to be able to take a stroll in the evening on their own two legs. If you have the incredible gift of movement, use it.

As you progress toward your goal, you will hit obstacles. Again, it took a while to get where you are, and that wasn't easy either! This is the time to look at how far you have come, pull up your boot straps, and push forward. Nothing worth having comes easy. Old habits die hard and change takes a repeated effort. Keep chipping away at that old you, and before you know it you will start to reveal the masterpiece that you are. Sometimes it takes setback to see the whole picture in all its beauty. But don't you give up!

Now, here's the plan:

- Write the goal(s) you hope to accomplish within a *four-week block*. Be specific!
 - Rate each goal according to difficulty, importance, the extent to which you have the skills, and resources to accomplish it.
 - Write an action commitment for each goal.
 - Share you goals and actions with a friend, and send a weekly progress report to your friend via email or text. Realize small steps are still progress!
- So...*what are you waiting for?*

Michelle Brown is an ACE certified fitness professional, 2nd Degree Kung Fu Black Belt Disciple, Level 2 certified TRX Functional Trainer, TRX RIP Certified Trainer, TRX Mind Body Certified Trainer, Trigger Point Rehabilitation Therapist, board member on the California Health Corps, blogger, public speaker and owner of Gumsaba Outdoor Fitness. Michelle has been helping clients surpass their goals since 1998. Gumsaba has been voted best in the east bay by diablo magazine readers for 2 years running, and offers outdoor fitness programs year round. Join Gumsaba for a FREE CLASS. Visit our website at gumsaba.com to get started. Use promo code GOGOAL to redeem your free week. For fore information visit www.gumsaba.com or call (925) 683 – 5630.

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A Non-invasive Way to Remove Kidney Stones

By Parminder Sethi, MD

Extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy (ESWL) is a technique for treating stones in the kidney and ureter that does not require invasive surgery. High-energy shock waves are passed through the body and used to break stones into pieces as small as grains of sand. Because of their small size, these pieces can pass from the body along with the urine. ESWL treatment is recommended when a kidney stone becomes too large or painful to pass on its own.

The patient lies on a soft cushion or membrane through which the waves pass. About 3,000 shock waves are needed to crush the stones over a period of 30 minutes.

The main advantage of this treatment is that many patients may be treated for kidney stones without invasive surgery. The disadvantage is that the patient has to pass the small fragments of the original stone. It is common to have some pain in the kidney and ureter as the small stone fragments pass.

After treatment is complete, the patient can move about almost at once. Many people can fully resume daily activities within one to two days. Special diets are not required, but drinking plenty of water helps the stone fragments pass. Usually a lithotripsy patient is asked to strain his or her urine afterward to collect pieces for analysis and to determine what the stones are made of. The passage of stone fragments may take a few days or a week and may cause mild pain.

Not all kidney stones are candidates for this type of treatment. The size, number, location, and composition of the stones are factors that must be taken into account when exploring treatment options. Also, the stones must be clearly viewed by the x-ray monitor so the shock waves can be targeted accurately. If anatomical abnormalities prevent this, other methods of stone removal may have to be considered.

Through examination, x-ray and other tests, the doctor can decide whether this is the best treatment for the patient. In those patients who are thought to be good candidates for this treatment, about 70 to 90 percent are found to be free of stones within three months of treatment.

Parminder Sethi, MD is a urologist with Pacific Urology. The urology group has partnered with John Muir Health to provide a dedicated, on-site Storz lithotripter machine at the Concord Campus. Kidney stone patients can often undergo ESWL within 24-48 hours. For more information, please call (925)937-7740.

Advertorial



Medical Practice and Physicians Receive Awards

By Sandy Goldberg

Diablo Valley Oncology is very proud to announce that for the fourth consecutive year, we have been named a Top Work Place by the Bay Area News Group and Workplace Dynamics' list of Top Work Places in 2014. Out of 1,200 organizations, only 100 companies were ranked as Top Work Places after employees submitted surveys addressing company leadership, compensation and training, diversity/inclusion, career development, family-friendly flexibility, and values and ethics. Private companies and non-profits as well as publicly held businesses were included in the analysis.

"Our physicians and management team understand that in order for us to provide the best care for our patients, we must first provide the best for our employees. Their happiness and satisfaction enable them to provide exceptional patient care and make a difference in the lives of those we serve," explains Lori Orr, Chief Operating Officer.

Most likely, this physician inspired mission of providing the best for employees and patients explains why our doctors consistently receive the Patients' Choice Award, a distinguished honor that recognizes physicians who have received high scores and excellent reviews from their patients. Our multi-specialty group of medical oncologists, hematologists, urologists and radiation oncologists were rated by their patients on various components of care such as ease of appointment, promptness, courteous staff, accuracy of diagnosis, amount of time they spent with the patient, their bedside manner, and follow-up care. They received a near perfect four star rating by their patients.

Knowing that we received these awards because of positive feedback from our employees and patients makes the recognition that much more special!

Two years ago, Diablo Valley Oncology and Hematology Medical Group and Pacific Urology merged to become the first multi-specialty group of its kind in Contra Costa County. This merger created the opportunity for the practices to deliver a stronger continuity of care for patients and create their comprehensive prostate cancer program and multi specialty cancer consultation service. For more information contact Sandy Goldberg, Outreach Manager at 925-677-5041.

Advertorial

Grief Support Groups and Classes

Hospice of the East Bay has announced a new schedule for their support groups and workshops for adults, children, and teens experiencing grief after the death of a loved one. Classes will be offered at Hospice's Administrative Offices located at 3470 Buskirk Avenue in Pleasant Hill.

Bereavement Services are provided free of charge to all community members in need, however donations are greatly appreciated.

Pre-registration is required for all groups and classes, except our drop-in group. To register, please call Hospice of the East Bay at (925) 887-5681.

Groups for Adults

Adults Who Have Lost a Parent

- Pleasant Hill ~ Mondays, 6 - 8^{PM} ~ July 21 - September 15

Widow and Widowers' Support

- Pleasant Hill Afternoons ~ Thursdays, 1:30 to 3:30^{PM} ~ June 5 - July 24
- Pleasant Hill Evenings ~ Wednesdays, 6 to 8^{PM} ~ June 4 - July 23

Drop-In Bereavement Support Group

- Pleasant Hill ~ 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month ~ 4:30 - 6^{PM}

Groups for Children and Teens

The Bridge

- Pleasant Hill ~ Bi-monthly support program for grieving children and teens. Support is also available for parents/guardians. Sign up now for fall classes.

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Speech Therapy and Learning Skills

By Ric Outman, Speech Pathologist

At Diablo Valley Speech and Language Clinic, now California Therapy Connection, we have provided speech and language therapy for articulation, stuttering, and voice disorders in a private practice setting, at hospitals, and as a contractor to the public and private schools. We work with both children and adults, providing both assessments and therapy. It is our goal to provide therapy when necessary and move the client through the therapy process as quickly as possible, involving the family to ensure the progress is maintained and the goals are achieved in therapy. The techniques used in therapy are taught to the family to help achieve the desired goals more quickly. There are times when therapy is not necessary, and with a little instruction minor speech or articulation errors can be easily corrected.

In addition to working on speech and language disorders, we have developed a program that not only looks at the student's ability to understand and process language, but also how they study. There are any number of reasons why these students struggle in school. Some children have not developed language adequately to comprehend language presented verbally or in written form, and others present with specific learning disabilities or the inability to attend and focus in class, all of which contribute to struggles in the classroom and long and tearful homework sessions. Many of the speech and/or language disorders can be remediated with proper therapy or being taught various strategies to compensate for specific learning disabilities. But, all too frequently these strategies are not taught, and the language disorder is not ameliorated and the student is destined to struggle in class, suffer poor grades and often they give up, leading to a sense of failure and poor self-esteem. During this time the student may be battling their parents over homework with hours of tearful and unproductive results.

Most students don't know how to study. Some get by because learning comes easily to them, but they too may not know how to "really" study. Most students learn by memorization. That is, studying for the test. And as fast as they memorize the material they forget it, only having to "relearn" it again



Depression and Anxiety Alternatives San Ramon Valley

By William Shryer, LCSW, DCSW, Clinical Director, Diablo Behavioral Healthcare and Blackhawk TMS

Depression and anxiety frequently occur together, and they are not easily treated. More specifically, they do not respond to treatment at a high percentage rate. The two most common approaches to treatment are basic psychotherapy and the use of medications. Unfortunately, for the majority of patients, neither treatment results in remission or cessation of symptoms as we would hope or are led to believe.

People with major depression accompanied by high levels of anxiety are significantly less likely to benefit from antidepressant medication than those without anxiety.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) funded Sequenced Treatment Alternatives to Relieve Depression (STAR*D) study was published online ahead of print in January 2008, in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*. The STAR*D study initially reported that nearly 70% of patients studied became symptom free on medications. The actual result showed less than 30% of patients became symptom free, and by the time the patient had tried three drugs and experienced failure, the likelihood of remission was then down to 6.9%! What was even more alarming is that it appears that the NIMH "cooked the books," and it appears that the reported outcomes served to benefit the pharmaceutical industry (...shocking). As the public hopefully knows now, pharmaceutical funding of antidepressant trials produced scientific literature that was biased and profoundly misleading, a tale of persistent scientific misconduct that has now been reviewed by many authors. But STAR*D was a publicly funded trial, and of course we would hope and expect that the results would be honestly reported, given that it cost the taxpayers 35 million dollars!

The harm this has done for those trying to obtain relief from depression is difficult to calculate.

There are forms of therapy such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) that work far better than therapy focused on the never ending rehashing early childhood developments, in fact research supports CBT and finds open-ended traditional psychotherapy

and again to accommodate the test. Memorization is a short term fix to get a good grade, but if you are not blessed with good memory skills or memory strategies, then this can be a painfully frustrating exercise.

So, what can be done to change these results? If you study tomorrow as you did today you will most likely get the exact same result. You must change what, and how, you study to get a different, and in this case, better result. This is not the "silver bullet" that will end all learning disabilities or language disorders, but it will go a long way to improve the study skills and hopefully result in study habit changes that will improve grades and understanding and eliminate the homework wars. These skill and strategies can be utilized by all students of all ages, not only those with a language or learning disabilities and will provide a lifelong means of successful and positive learning.

First, you have to realize there is a difference between "studying" and "doing homework." Studying is like eating a whole, wonderful chocolate cake in one sitting. If you eat the entire cake in one sitting you most likely would get sick, and, at the very least, become very uncomfortable. It would not be a positive experience. Studying is much the same. If we have to do all the studying at one time, then we will feel pressure, and it will not be a positive experience. If, on the other hand, we break down our studying into small segments, as we would if eating a chocolate cake, we can manage these small segments in a positive way and thus end with a positive outcome. Homework is the action of doing the assigned work to be done at home, and it may or may not include "studying."

Speech and language therapy and learning effective study skills should not be a long term process, extending from one year to the next. If it is continuing beyond a reasonable amount of time, you may want to ask yourself a few questions: 1) Is the therapy or treatment effective; are you seeing results? 2) Is the client motivated and wanting to change? 3) Does the therapist have the skills and knowledge to effectively remediate the problem areas?

If you have any questions about speech and language therapy, wonder if you should or shouldn't explore speech and language therapy now or if it is better to wait, or want to explore if your child can benefit from learning how to study more effectively call Ric Outman at 925-457-5437 or email ricoutman@gmail.com. Please note our webpage is currently down for repair.

Advertorial

capable of bringing about minimal results. Due to the misconduct of the authors of STAR*D and the resulting scandal, patients are once again left to look for new alternatives to what has been failing them for so long.

Recently there has been a renewed interest in things that were minimized and discounted by many for so long, and now we know that this was due to the pharmaceutical industry that did not want any competition or to have their profit margins impacted by what was then called alternative approaches. Now we know that many of these alternative approaches based on nutraceuticals or such things as Vitamin D, all of the B vitamins, Omega III fatty acids, and the list goes on, support a real shift in the treatment of depression and other disorders. At Diablo Behavioral Healthcare we know much about alternative treatments, and we utilize both alternative and traditional treatments carefully and use the smallest doses needed to achieve relief.

Non-invasive, non-systemic treatments such as Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) prescribed by one of our well-trained psychiatrists offers real help for many who have spent years getting no relief from antidepressant medications. Ask your mental health provider about TMS to see what they know about this exciting FDA approved treatment alternative. Please visit our website or refer your provider to our site for more information.

Due to the fiasco with the NIMH and the less than honest behavior from the huge pharmaceutical companies that brought you all of the well-known antidepressants, insurance companies are beginning to cover this new treatment. It seems the cozy relationship between medical insurance companies and the pharmaceutical companies is becoming frayed. Insurance companies are becoming aware that a non-medical approach that is showing great success and does not risk medication side effects is more economical for them. TMS doesn't lead to side-effects such as nausea, headache, fatigue, weight gain, or sleep problems that many of the antidepressants have. For more information or to discuss your treatment for either depression, anxiety or both, call our office and we will take the time to discuss your options. We also discuss these subjects on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at our Danville office at 7^{PM}.

For more information on any behavioral or developmental concern, call us at (925) 648-4800, and we will take the time to answer your questions. To learn more about TMS, visit our website www.BlackHawkTMS.com, and scroll down for a brief video on TMS. Our location is 4185 Blackhawk Plaza Circle Suite 210, Danville, CA.

Advertorial



The Eye Opener

By Gregory Kraskowsky, O.D., Alamo Optometry
Systemic Diseases

As many of you may or may not be aware, almost every systemic disease can have ocular effects. Most patients are aware that common conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure can have severe visual and ocular consequences. However, any disease, including lupus, colitis, leukemia, and high cholesterol, can affect the eye. The eye is no different from any other organ in the body; it needs blood and oxygen to survive. If this is affected or reduced, vision and/or ocular health will definitely be compromised. These changes can vary from a prescription change, cataract formation, or retinal disease, to name a few. That is why it is very important to let us know of any systemic ailments and medications on the patient questionnaire, as these can have a profound effect on the eyes. Many times patients don't report having some conditions or using medications to us because they feel it is not important or that "it has nothing to do with my eyes." You can safely assume that any medication you take or ailment you have can alter vision and ocular health. For the purposes of this article, I will cover the two most prevalent diseases: diabetes and high blood pressure.

Diabetes affects about 10 percent of the population in the United States and is characterized by either a deficiency in insulin production (type 1) or insulin resistance (type 2). The main ocular effect of diabetes is retinopathy, which is a disease of the retina. Diabetic retinopathy can lead to poor vision and even blindness. At first the integrity of the blood vessels breaks down, which can lead to blood leaking into the retina. If blood sugar levels stay high or fluctuate, diabetic retinopathy will keep getting worse. Due to the poor retinal blood flow through these damaged blood vessels, new blood vessels grow on the retina because insufficient amounts of oxygen are reaching the cells within the retina. This may

CARDA continued from front page

subject has been present there. Area Search dogs typically operate off-leash, while Trailing dogs work on long leashes.

What happens when CARDA is called to assist? Eric Sheets, CARDA Program Manager reports: "CARDA dispatchers know the unique qualifications of each team. They have the experience to ask the right questions so that they can call out the most appropriate teams that are closest to the requested search location."

The call out to Feather Falls, for example, demanded a team capable of repeatedly dangling beneath a helicopter to search the treacherous terrain of rugged canyon walls. After arriving at the scene, Sheets and his Australian Cattle Dog "Seven" took six trips on the short haul line to reach remote locations. Trained to submit when picked up and put in harness, "Seven" stayed focused on the task.

Each mission is different. Because CARDA is contacted for assistance when local resources have proven insufficient, call-outs often come in the middle of the night. Information provided at the search site contains a profile on the subject, a communication plan, a medical plan, a map with the boundaries of the search area assigned to each team in an Area Search, or a list of places the subject is expected to have visited for a Trailing mission.

In addition to partnering with California Emergency Management and local agencies, CARDA occasionally assists in out-of-state searches. Seven CARDA teams participated in the March 2014 mission at the Oso, Washington mudslide. Dogs tuned out the heavy equipment grinding away nearby and responded to hand signals from their human partners. Shay Cook recalls: "I was honored to be asked to help. Search teams received lots of appreciation from the community."

Anyone seriously interested in joining CARDA is invited to attend training sessions as a guest. In order to become a pre-apprentice, the candidate must ask and be accepted by a sponsor. The candidate also needs to pass a strenuous physical fitness test and present a dog judged by the sponsor to be capable of performing the work. A second sponsor is required for the trainee to become an apprentice. Usually preparation

sound good, but these new blood vessels are weak. They can leak very easily, even while you are sleeping. If this happens, blood can leak into and around the macula, which will cause decreased vision. Retinopathy can also cause swelling of the macula; macular edema reduces vision as this specialized area of the retina is compromised. The only way to diagnose this is through a comprehensive dilated optometric examination. Annual exams can help detect retinopathy and monitor retinopathy before it affects your vision.

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is another vascular disorder that forces your heart to work harder to pump blood through your arteries. This can lead to hardening of the arteries and subsequent heart failure. In addition to all of the other body organs it can affect, the eye can also be compromised. The blood vessels of the retina over time can narrow and cause a decrease in blood to the retina. Compromised blood flow can cause swelling of the optic nerve and macula, which over time can lead to decreased vision and possible stroke in the eye. Since this is something that cannot be self-monitored, an annual dilated examination can help in the detection and monitoring of this potentially blinding disease.

To help combat these diseases, the absolute best thing you can do is to keep the disease under control. The more your blood sugar and blood pressure are under control, the less likely eye consequences will be an issue. That means maintaining visits to your doctor, taking your medications, and making life-style changes, etc. as prescribed. Keep in mind that just because you "feel" fine and have your diseases under control, the fact is you still have the disease. Along with your regular doctor visits, annual eye exams should be on your list to keep these diseases monitored and under control.

Dr. K. at Alamo Optometry is your hometown eye doctor for outstanding service, vision care, and designer eyewear. He can be reached at 820-6622 or visit his office at 3201 Danville Blvd., Suite 165 in Alamo. Visit our website at www.alamooptometry.com, and join us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @Alamo Optometry.

Advertorial



CARDA teams train for helicopter operations. Photo courtesy of CARDA. for certification testing takes two years.

Kathryn Stewart explains the sponsor's role: "As an apprentice, you are responsible for yourself and your dog. Your sponsor is responsible for making sure the training you receive sets up the possibility for you to succeed." Certification in First Responder First Aid and CPR as well as completion of training in the following disciplines is required: Map, compass and GPS navigation; Scent Theory; Survival; Helicopter operations; Low Angle Rescue; Mantracking; Crime Scene preservation; Radio communications; National ICS System.

Dogs from working breeds are most popular as partners, although occasionally a mixed-breed shelter dog succeeds. Canine training includes Socialization, Obedience, Agility, Swimming, Transportation, Helicopter orientation, and Search work. Each dog works for a reward - a toy or a treat. Dogs love their jobs and hate to be taken from the field for breaks. Handlers need to know when to rest their partners. Hot dry weather can time a dog out quickly, while cool damp weather preserves the animal's capacity to trace a scent.


The final phase of Mission Ready testing for Area Search teams
See **CRDA** continued on page 30



Dr. Yen Nguyen-Lenk practices a compassionate approach to dentistry. A graduate of Tufts University Dental School, she has over fourteen years experience in family dentistry and cosmetic procedures.

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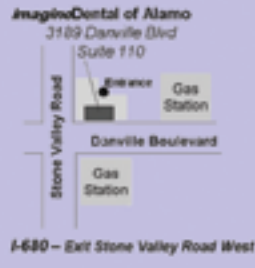
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The New Breast Implants

By Dr. Barbara Persons

As a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon who completed a fellowship in Aesthetic, Breast, & Laser surgery, I have been on the cutting edge of breast augmentation surgery for many years. I have been amazed and delighted at the incredible advances the leading breast implant manufacturers have made in the past 10+ years and wanted to share the history of breast implants with you.

- **1942** - Eugene G. Rochow of Harvard University, pioneered the manufacture of commercial silicones
 - **1963** - Dow Corning launches the first silicone gel-filled breast implant.
 - **1968** - Saline filled implants launched in the US in 1968. [First Generation]
 - **1970s-80s** - Silicone implants widely used in the U.S. [Second Generation]
 - **1992-2006** silicone implants banned in the U.S. due to concerns about performance
 - **2006** Third Generation Silicone implants FDA approved
- The Third Generation implants offer many benefits over earlier products:
- They feature a multi-layer shell (exterior) with a barrier layer to make them more durable
 - They are filled with a special gel that is quite cohesive (non-spreading). You can cut an implant in half, and there is no flow of the gel.

Despite the advances in these Third Generation implants, every patient has unique needs and desires. In a typically week, I consult with a dozen or so women seeking breast augmentation. A number of questions and topics are discussed with the most popular being, “saline or silicone”? There are many factors involved in making the proper choice. This makes the need for an in-depth consultation even more critical. In general, most women are choosing the new generation of silicone gel implants versus saline, although an increasing number are also opting for fat grafting as an adjunct to implant augmentation or reconstruction. Recent studies have supported the use of fat grafting to the breast and I often perform liposuction of the bra roll for a “contour” breast augmentation.

Both silicone and saline implants have an outer silicone shell. The silicone

implants which come pre-filled with a cohesive silicone gel whereas the saline implants are filled with sterile saline after being placed. As an aside, the debate surrounding the safety of silicone implants has largely been resolved, as there has not been a single substantiated case of silicone filled implants causing systemic disease.

Saline implants tend to be chosen by a younger demographic prior to having children. Because these implants are filled after they are placed under the breast tissue, the incision can be more distant (such as the umbilical method of implantation) and will result in almost no visible scarring and has no impact on breast feeding. Saline implants have a lifespan of 7-10 years. Saline implants are less optimal for women seeking larger implants such as a D cup.

Silicone implants have once again become the more popular choice among all age groups, even though the implants themselves cost more, as the thicker, gel-like consistency creates a more natural look and feel. These implants can create a natural effect for women desiring small, moderate, or ample breast size. The procedure using this type of implants requires a small incision, often in the crease below the breast, resulting in a very small scar, typically hidden under the breast. The risks associated with silicone implants are similar to those associated with saline while having a significantly longer lifespan.

Recent advances in fat harvesting and grafting have made fat transfer a growing method of breast augmentation in my practice. It is ideal for women looking to increase their breasts by one half to one cup size, for example from B to a small C. Fat transfer is often incorporated with breast lift (mastopexy), reconstruction and augmentation. Mild liposuction is used to remove the fat from an unwanted area such as the flanks or abdomen and injected without a need for any additional incisions.

Whether you are considering a breast augmentation for the first time or are a patient with existing implants looking for a change, I look forward to sharing my experience and expertise in determining the most suitable augmentation option for you.

Dr. Barbara Persons is a plastic, cosmetic and reconstructive surgeon and is Board Certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc. Persons Plastic Surgery, Inc. is her cosmetic & reconstructive surgery center, conveniently located at 911 Moraga Road, suite 205 in Lafayette. She may be reached at 925-283-4012 or drbarb@personsplasticsurgery.com.



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Your Personal Nutritionist

By Linda Michaelis RD,MS

Simply Lowering High Blood Pressure

Lately I am seeing many clients that wish to get off of their blood pressure medication because of its side effects. They feel that they have to resort to eating a bland diet. I am thrilled to be able to show them that dining can be enjoyable, especially when they are well educated.

Let me tell you about my client John and his wife Adelle, who were referred by a local physician. The doctor was inclined to increase John's medication because his blood pressure numbers were not in the normal range. However, the doctor said, "If you see Linda, we'll wait two months." John and Adelle are retired, the kids are gone, and Adelle wanted a break from cooking. They felt that this was finally the time to enjoy more restaurants and travel, but John expressed some nervousness in going to restaurants because of a realistic fear that the food could raise his blood pressure.

After seeing John's food diary, I decided our basic strategy was to limit his salt intake to 2,000 mg of sodium per day, which is equal to a teaspoon of salt. I saw that his choice of foods – breads, bacon, soups, chips, and deli meats--included heavy doses of salt. We first focused on how to read food labels, pointing out that in spite of claims on packages, a low sodium product is 140 mg per serving.

As I always do in my counseling, I strive to take what my clients enjoy and set up plans based on their favorite foods. I introduced John to breakfast options that have no salt such as oatmeal or even a slice of salt-free bread with unsalted almond or peanut butter. I also recommended that John enjoy an omelet made with unsalted butter, Swiss cheese (that is naturally low in salt at 60 mg/ slice), spinach, and mushrooms along with fresh salsa that has very little salt. I also introduced him to Kashi Go Lean as the best cold cereal with only 80 grams of sodium per cup.

I told Adelle that while I appreciate her desire to go out to eat, there is a short list of foods that must be prepared at home to avoid salt traps. These include homemade soups (at home you can easily substitute wonderful fresh herbs and spices for salt), baked turkey breast and chicken with BBQ sauce, vinaigrette salad dressings, and marinara and cheese sauces that John loves. I introduced Adelle to salt-free chicken stock as well as vinegars that provide a terrific flavor

when splashed onto cooked veggies. Adelle now cooks a great sauce for John's beloved spaghetti which consists of chopped tomatoes along with fresh basil, oregano, and garlic, adding some aged parmesan because it only has 75 mg/ Tbs of sodium. Adelle also loves to make beans soups, and I told her she can buy salt free beans or use dried beans and soak them overnight and cook them the next day.

Adelle and John did not realize that all breads have an average of 150 mg of sodium per slice, so I suggested using salt-free bread for their sandwiches and adding yellow mustard (55 mg/teaspoon). In addition, John was happy to learn he could still enjoy his snacks, such as unsalted baked chips, unsalted nuts, or even dry cereal that is low in salt.

I told Adelle and John that it would be my job to make sure they will enjoy their glorious retirement in restaurants and become more comfortable travelling. We have discussed the advantages of ordering fish, beef, or chicken that is freshly cooked without salt by instead using olive oil, lemon, pepper and herbs, which are now very popular. Though salt is a favorite addition of many cooks to veggies, we discussed the need to be firm with the waiter that you cannot have salt. A side salad is great to order, and many restaurants will bring you a decanter of oil and vinegar. I emphasized that John can still enjoy a restaurant meal with salt if he keeps the other meals of the day relatively salt free to meet the 2,000 mg/day sodium goal. We also discussed the advantages of staying in condos with kitchens, which will allow for eating breakfast and some lunches in and dinner out.

I advised John that he must drink 6-8 glasses of water per day to get rid of the salt he is consuming and also to walk 30 minutes per day. He agreed that he would begin doing both.

I am glad to inform you that after working with John for a month, his blood pressure is the best it has been in years, and he has lost 10 pounds. John and Adelle have decided to go visit their kids in Texas, and John says he is not scared of eating in restaurants anymore.

I will continue to follow John thru phone and e-mail, even in Texas, and assist him with eating while at his daughter's home. The good news is that John's visits were covered by his Aetna PPO insurance with a small copay.

Please feel free to call me at (925) 855-0150 or e-mail me at Lifeweight1@yahoo.com and tell me about your nutritional concerns. Refer to my website www.LindaRD.com for past articles, recipes, and nutrition tips in my blog section.

Advertorial

CARDA *continued from page 28*

involves searching a 120-acre site for one to three subjects within a four-hour period. Subjects (CARDA volunteers) are so well hidden an ordinary person would have to step on them to find them. Sonya Roth, who achieved Mission Ready status with her Golden Labrador "Ammo" in March, explains: "You don't know until you find them how many are out there. You need a search strategy to get your dog into the proper place to pick up the scent. When a person hides for hours, the scent pool changes."

Sponsored by Stewart, Roth is grateful for time spent flanking her mentor. "Everybody's dog works differently. You learn a lot walking along." For a new recruit, there are multiple skills to master. "If you make mistakes in training," Roth says, "the dog picks up on it and has to be retrained to fix the error." Recertification is required every two years. Veteran CARDA members find they can sometimes prepare a dog to be Mission Ready in 18 months, but even an experienced handler may need two years to train a new partner.

Prior to consideration for certification, Trailing teams test on scent trails of different ages – 48, 60, and 72 hours old. Their final Mission Ready course involves a scent trail of 1-1 ½ miles, with three to six turns requiring decisions to be made.

Training doesn't end with Mission Ready Certification. Most volunteers continue to train twice a week to work on specific skills. Carol Shapiro, CARDA President, notes that the cost to purchase equipment, provide transportation, and care for a canine teammate can be as much as \$10,000 annually. What motivates a person to give so much to the community?

Sheets comments: "Everyone has a different reason for becoming involved – a family member once found by a canine search team; an interest in working with dogs to benefit the community; a background in hiking, camping and wilderness survival; the desire to help; and the

physical ability to do so."

Alyson Hart, now working with her second Trailing partner, "Gig," answers:

"I enjoy doing something that is very worthwhile, helping a person or family during a tough time. I have also seen parts of California that I would not have gotten to see otherwise, all while hanging out with my dog."

Stewart, Principal of the Orion Academy in Moraga, replies; "I think CARDA saved my life. It keeps me from getting old. It's a great group of people with a collegial feeling. Outside my work, this is the most fulfilling thing I have done."

Shapiro is excited to report CARDA is entering a new era. The new strategic plan recognizes financial support from corporate sponsors as well as private donors is key to keeping the organization viable. For more information, visit www.carda.org.



Sonya Roth and Ammo achieved Mission Ready Certification in March 2014. Photo by Jody Morgan



Uh Oh, It's Bathing Suit Season!

By Dr. Jerome Potozkin

When I was growing up, I always dreaded the arrival of the summer months

because that meant it was time to don a bathing suit. Back then I was always on the chubby side. I remember my parents taking me to Sears to shop for clothing in the "Husky" section. I hated that and remember the first time I was able to fit into a pair of "slim fit" jeans. As an adult I have been committed to fitness and a healthy diet so that I no longer dread getting into a bathing suit in public. However, if you feel somewhat out of shape, I have some ideas that can help.

First, take things one day at a time. Integrate a fitness routine into your lifestyle. If it has been a while since you've exercised, check with your primary care doctor before starting again. Start gradually, and build up your endurance. Make sure you do something you enjoy. There are so many opportunities where we live for tennis, golfing, swimming, biking, etc. Get outside and get your body moving!

What you eat is probably the most important ingredient with respect to how you look. Several years ago I joined "Team In Training" to run a half marathon. I had never run before. As we gradually increased our mileage, I found myself thinking that because I ran 6-8 miles, I could eat anything I wanted. I quickly learned that no matter how much I ran or worked out, I could always "out eat" the calories I burned. I actually gained weight while training for the first half marathon. Small changes over time can lead to great results. For me, eliminating bread with dinner made a huge difference. If you can't figure out a healthy way of eating, there is a lot of information online. You may want to consult with a professional nutritionist.

For many years, liposuction has been an option to remove fat. In my opinion, liposuction should not be viewed as a substitute for a healthy lifestyle. Liposuction is best for someone in shape who has a localized

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fatty deposit that they can't get rid of through diet and exercise. Tumescant Liposuction, performed completely with local anesthesia, was invented by Dermatologist Dr. Jeffrey Klein. This technique has proven to be the safest way to perform liposuction as it avoids the risks associated with general anesthesia. It is a procedure that I have been performing for 20 years. We perform this procedure in our fully accredited operating rooms. Most people are surprised at how rapid their recovery is.

Technology has led to innovations in the non-surgical reduction of fat. The first device cooled the fat, resulting in death of the fat cells. This technique can work for small fatty areas. The second device that came to the United States utilized ultrasound to melt fat. This device was somewhat limited by patients' pain tolerance. We are excited to have been chosen as one of the first centers in the United States to offer the new and improved UltraShape V3 device which utilizes ultrasound to painlessly destroy fat cells. It works best in people with small fatty areas. Most people require three treatments and require no downtime.

If you don't like the way you look in a swim suit, my first recommendation is to look at your diet and exercise. If those methods have not worked, we would be happy to consult with you to educate you about other treatment options. For the month of July we will offer complimentary consultations for Tumescant Liposuction as well as for non-surgical methods to remove fat.

Dr. Potozkin is a board certified dermatologist who has been serving the local community since 1993. His fully accredited dermatological and laser facility is located at 600 San Ramon Valley Blvd, Suite 102 in Danville. He is accepting new patients. Please call (925) 838-4900 or visit Potozkin.com for more information.

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C L A S S

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COLLEGE STUDENT AVAILABLE FOR HOUSE CARE/PET CARE/SMALL PROJECTS - 21 year-old college student available for help around the house or office including organizing, running errands, helping with small projects, walking dogs, pet sitting, house sitting, etc! Experience as a personal/administrative assistant, farming experience on farms at UC Davis, and more. Local references available. Contact Amy at amy.corstor@gmail.com.

I F I E D

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GOPHER REMOVAL SERVICE
TRAPPING-NO-POISON

Safe for your family, pets, and the ecosystem: Call Tri Valley Trapper for free consultation/estimate: **925-765-4209**.

LACROSSE GOALIE COACHING

WOMEN'S LACROSSE GOALIE COACHING. Eight years playing experience, has won College Club (WCLA) National Championship, All-League Team (WWLL), All-Tournament Team (WWLL/WCLA). Please contact Amy at amy.corstor@gmail.com for more information.

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Danville Area Real Estate: Luxury Home Market Clawing its way Back

The road to a full recovery has been a slow one for Luxury Homes. For the purpose of this review I have defined Luxury Homes to include homes that are 5,000 square feet and larger sitting on a premium lot that is between one half and one full acre, equipped with a pool. This definition has been overlain on the geographies including Alamo, Blackhawk, Danville, and Diablo, basically what in my personal view comprises the Danville Area.

The Luxury Home Market bottomed in 2010 both in terms of average price and dollars paid per square feet. At that time you could have bought a 5,800 square ft. home for an average price of about \$1.9 million with a value of \$327 per square foot. Those prices were nearly 30% below the current market for a Luxury Home and 14 lucky bargain hunters snagged one.

During the Luxury Home Market peak in 2007, only 14 homes sold, but they did so with an impressive average price of \$2,920,833 and an average square foot price of \$506. I'm frequently asked, "Are we in a bubble"? I don't think so. In order to match the 2007 peak, Luxury Home prices will need to rise another 20% and at the current rate of growth we have some way to go before we even get close.

Although the line of ascent since 2010 has not been perfectly straight, it has for the most part been steady and I believe it is gaining strength. Sales are happening faster. Days on Market stands at 42 and are 25% less than 2013 and roughly a third of where they were 2012 at 154. Currently, through June 20, 2014, a total of seven Luxury Homes have sold. The prices are roughly the same as they were for the entire

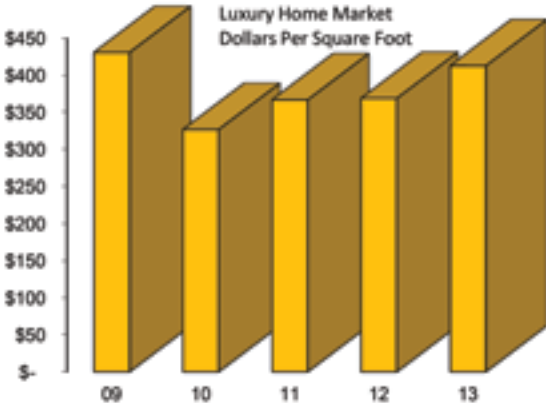
year in 2013, suggesting no great improvement over last year.

Encouraging, however, is there are three homes pending sale, hinting that this year will have more Luxury Home sales than last year. The Luxury Homes that are pending sale are carrying a list price of \$3,055,000 and an average square foot price of \$463. If those prices hold, it is likely that 2014 prices will eclipse 2013 prices.

It should be of interest to anyone who follows the market that 15 Luxury homes are currently for sale and they are carrying an average list price of \$3,610,905 and a square foot price of \$556. That is very aggressive pricing compared to the current market. If these homes were to close at list price, their average price would exceed the 2007 peak by 24%. That, I believe would be unlikely and I think would definitely indicate a bubble. I just don't think we are there yet.

Nancy and I have more than 2,700 email subscribers who receive this article in advance of publication. You can add yourself to the list by sending me an email or signing up for it on our website www.thecombsteam.com. I assure you no spam will follow.

Trying to figure out your next move? Need numbers and answers to make your decisions? Nancy and I will be happy to provide you with a personal consultation to help you figure it out. No charge and no pressure just our honest opinions. Please call 925-989-6086 or send me an email at joecombs@thecombsteam.com.



Luxury Home Mkt. Alamo, Blackhawk, Danville, Diablo					
Year	Units Sold	DOM	Sold Price	\$/Sq. Foot	Avg Size
09	11	175	\$ 2,551,388	\$ 431	5919
10	14	91	\$ 1,908,000	\$ 327	5834
11	21	98	\$ 2,163,102	\$ 367	5894
12	14	154	\$ 2,195,179	\$ 369	5948
13	15	62	\$ 2,464,961	\$ 413	5968

Note: 5000 + Sq Ft. Home on .5-1.0 acre and Pool



Magee Ranch Executive Home



Immaculate 5 bedroom Single Story, Great Flow, Pool spa Level play yard. Priced to Sell \$1,639,000

Diablo Creek Single Story



Amazing updated 4 bedroom single story has it all. Large level lot beautiful pool and pavilion. Priced to Sell \$1,679,000

Danville Executive Home



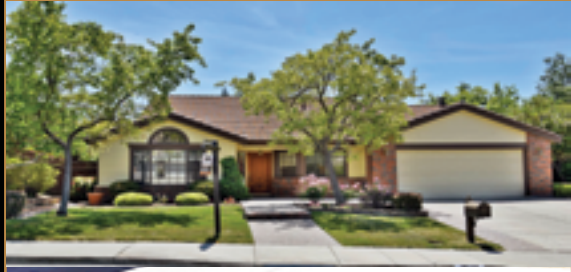
Spacious, luxurious, 4 bed 3 bath home, Chef's kitchen, view lot, putting green and spa. Priced to Sell \$1,099,000

Alamo Oaks



Updated 4 bedroom 3595 sq. foot home with 1.13 acre lot. Perfect for horses or a vineyard. Priced to Sell \$1,839,000

Anderson Ranch Single Level



Nicely updated 4 bed single level with level lot and Views! Priced to Sell \$995,000