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Pocket News

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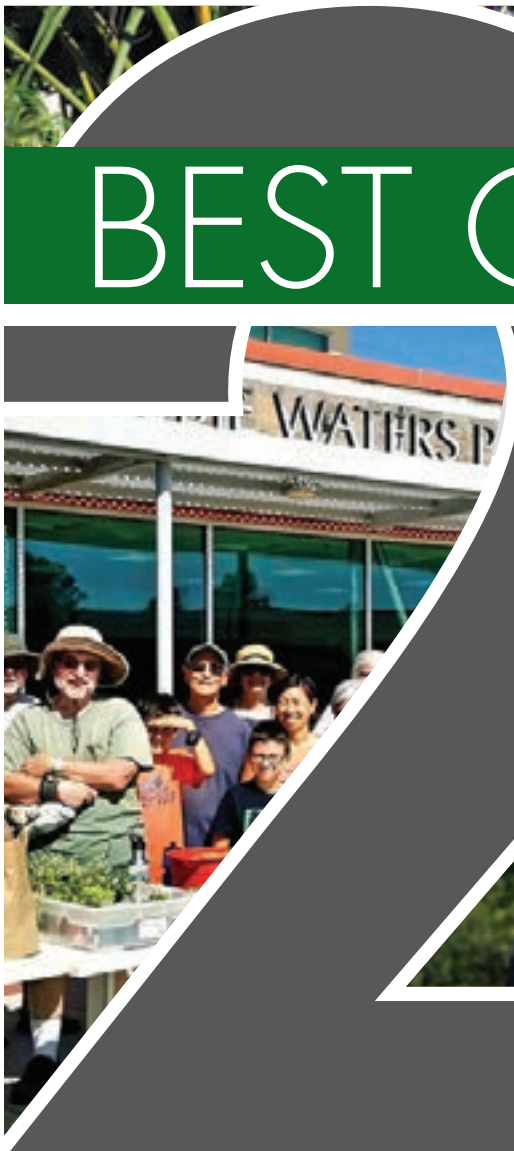
BEST OF 2019 YEAR IN REVIEW



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Best of 2019 Pocket News

(Editor's Note: Thanks to the talented team of writers at Valley Community Newspapers, I am proud to present the Best of 2019 for the Pocket News. -Monica Stark)

Pocket-Greenhaven Community Association recognizes community-driven neighbors



By Devin Lavelle

We love our wonderful community. With friendly, caring neighbors, a high level of safety, natural beauty, great schools, and so many rich opportunities for families and youth, it is truly a blessing to live in and represent such a treasure. We recognize, though, that the quality of life we all enjoy did not happen on accident. It takes caring neighbors, working hard to make a difference in the areas they are passionate about. The Pocket Greenhaven Community Association celebrated these people who make our community such a wonderful place to live, work and play at Pride of the Pocket on May 30.

We are grateful for the outstanding contributions each of them have made to our fantastic community, helping to advance the Pocket Greenhaven Community Association's values: Inclusiveness, safety, education, quality of life.

Lieutenant Paul Freeman retired from the Sacramento Police Department in January after 22 years of distinguished service, a career spent making an Outstanding Contribution to Safe and Quality of Life in the Pocket Greenhaven Community. "I want to know that my family, friends, and other loved ones can thrive in the community where we live. If we don't feel safe, we don't feel free to thrive."

Known for maintaining an outstanding, collaborative relationship with the community he's made home since the early 1970s, Lt. Freeman frequently noted that many cases were solved because of that input from the community he loves so much. "I love the small-town feel that our community has always had. When I go out and about, I always see people I know, and it's been like that for me for over 45 years."

The Friends of the Sacramento River Parkway have

see NEIGHBORS page 3

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Cover photo by: Annin Piper

Neighbors:

continued from page 2

been advocating for completion of the Sacramento River Parkway for over 25 years, fulfilling the promise made in the City's 1975 master plan. Through their advocacy and Councilmember Jennings' leadership, the Parkway is poised to be open throughout the entire Pocket-Greenhaven community in the next several years, providing a natural treasure for our entire community to enjoy and an Outstanding Contribution to Quality of Life, Inclusion and Safety in our community. "We deserve a safe, off-road trail for recreation and for commuting where bicyclists and pedestrians are separated from motor vehicle traffic – and we all deserve unfettered access to the river on the levee we all maintain with our tax dollars. Completing the Sacramento River Parkway is a matter of equity for all Sacramento residents," said PGCA leader Jim Houpt.

Completing the Parkway will truly be a crowning jewel for our wonderful community. "The Pocket-Greenhaven community is a treasure among Sacramento's neighborhoods. We enjoy low crime rates (the lowest in the city), idyllic parks and greenways, and our beloved access to much of the Sacramento River flowing through our area. Completing the Sacramento River Parkway will help to make this community a better place to live and play."

Lane Shapiro organizes a weekly coffee gathering, every Wednesday morning at Cafe Latte. This is not in itself unique, our wonderful café is crowded most morning with friends gathering and chatting over breakfast and coffee. What makes Lane's gathering unique is that he actively invites everyone in the community to join the group, friends or strangers alike, through humorous posts on Nextdoor and an event listing right here in Pocket News. First time attendees are welcomed warmly and soon become friends, making the gathering an Outstanding Contribution to Inclusion. Seeking to replace the social aspects many retirees miss from the workplace, Lane"started Wednesday Coffee and Conversation to meet my neighbors and hoped, and has happened, that more people felt the same and have created their own social events, shared travel and hobbies. I've met so many awesome people from our community … it doesn't get any better than that."

Ms. Stephanie Berry has taught kindergarten at Matsuyama Elementary since it opened in 1973, providing Outstanding Service to Youth. "It has been an honor to serve the families and their children here at Matsuyama. In Kindergarten I am their first teacher which is a job I take very seriously. The growth in Kindergarten is exponential both academically and socially. To be a witness to this is inspiring. The children who walk into my room in September become leaders, helpers, writers, readers, and problem solvers. They find themselves trying new tasks daily with tenacity. The kind loving spirit is a wonderful place to come to every day. The joy and contagious giggles that permeates the room when I share a favorite book brings me joy."

In fact, she may have some ideas for future Pride of the Pocket awardees, "I have watched families completely transform our campus in a matter of hours at the Cherry Blossom and Harvest Festivals. All for the children to enjoy for three hours only to have a crew come in and clean it up. High school and middle school children volunteer time helping in our booths, giving back to a school that gave to them. It impresses upon our students the value of community service. The families I have met over the years are extremely caring and supportive. Whenever I have asked for help with repairing the snack tables or a new basketball hoop they are the first ones to volunteer. We have family members who are police officers or firefighters who have come to speak to the children. Each group bringing their own gear or truck. As a teacher here I know I have the support of the community behind me. That means the world to me."

Pocket Little League provides an outstanding experience for local kids. Volunteers operate a league full of teams in every age group. Beyond that, they invest tens of thousands of dollars and countless more volunteer hours annually keeping our local fields in top condition, providing Outstanding Service to Youth. "Our youth is our future and we feel that our investment will bear huge returns for their growth and development. What better way to teach our youth life lessons than through sports, and in particular the game of baseball. Baseball is probably one of the most difficult sports for kids to pick up, but it teaches them to overcome failure. Seeing the joy in the kids faces when they get their first hit or catching their first fly ball does not get old, and in that moment, they know that their hard work through the guidance of their coaches had paid off. Ultimately, they will carry on their fond memories of when they played in Little League and pass it on to future generations," said PLL President, Anthony Nguyen.

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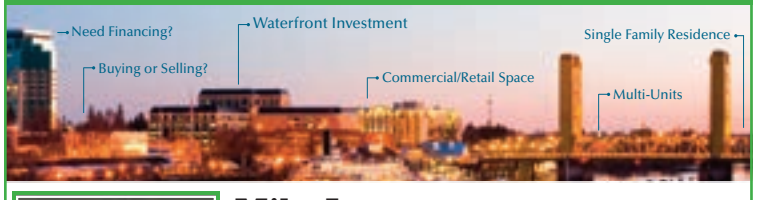
-Ben Franklin





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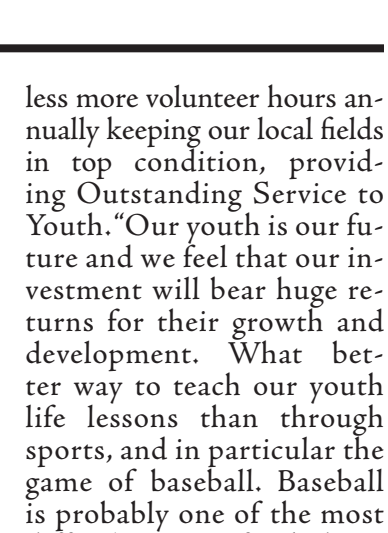

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SacRT proposes cutbacks on local bus service



By LANCE ARMSTRONG

Representatives of the Sacramento Regional Transit District on Jan. 8, 2019 presented details regarding a proposal to decrease the number of stops on certain local bus routes.

The presentation was made at the monthly meeting of the Pocket Greenhaven Community Association. Thirty-three people attended the meeting.

Known as SacRT Forward, the proposed route optimization project is a complete bus system redesign with the goal to design a simpler, more useful network.

The transit agency is approaching this project due to declining ridership.

Routes affected by the proposal include Pocket Area Routes 2 and 6. These routes would be eliminated, except for three morning and three afternoon trips during commute hours on each route.

Buses along both of these routes extend from Rush River and Windbridge drives to 8th and F streets in downtown Sacramento, but have varying stops in between.

Route 2 continues along Riverside Boulevard, while Route 6 travels along Land Park Drive and includes a stop at California Middle School.

These routes currently have 14 separate stops at eight locations, and run Monday through Friday.

Routes 2 and 6 would be renumbered 102 and 106.

No changes would be made to Route 3, which runs from Pocket Road and Greenhaven Drive to 7th and F streets, and Route 7, which travels between Rush River and Windbridge drives and 7th and F streets.

Route 81, which has more than 100 stops, currently runs from the University/65th Street light rail station to Florin Road and Riverside Boulevard. However, a proposal was presented to shorten that route to end at Florin Road and Greenhaven Drive.

This route includes a bus stop near John F. Kennedy High School.

As for Route 56, which includes a terminus at Cosumnes River College, it would no longer travel to Rush River and Windbridge drives. The route would instead end at Florin Road and Greenhaven Drive.

Sunday stops along that route would be improved from one-hour intervals to 45-minute intervals.

Through another proposal, Route 62, which runs from 3rd and J streets to Rush River and Windbridge drives, would be shortened to end at Florin Road and Greenhaven Drive.

A proposal to terminate Route 65 – bus service to the Delta Shores shopping center – was also presented.

Monday, Wednesday and Friday service would be eliminated due to low ridership.

James Boyle, SacRT director of planning, acknowledged future growth for that area, but stressed that the timing is not ideal to continue bus service to this shopping center.

"We're not designing a bus system for 30 years in the future," he said. "We design a bus system for what our community is now and maybe five years down the road."

Among the local residents who expressed their concerns regarding changes to the bus system was Amy Cleveland.

"I think they need to take into consideration students in their planning process, because their commute hours are much different than the average worker," she said. "The change, I think, would directly impact my youngest son. He comes home on RT every single day from (California Middle School). If (RT) only runs it at their peak hours, (it) would not be the middle of the afternoon when he gets out of school."

SacRT spokesperson Jessica Gonzalez mentioned that there are other routes with stops within walking distance from California Middle and Kennedy High schools.

Gonzalez added that SacRT offers other options for students.

"We also run a number of extra buses to and from Kennedy High School during the school year," she said. "These extra buses are not part of the SacRT Forward project. For Cal Middle School, we would retain the popular trip used by students.

"We also have special school trippers in the Pocket area, which are Routes 226, 227, 228, 246, 247 and 248. These routes will still operate; however, trip times may change slightly to improve on-time performance."

Erle Hall, a Pocket resident and SacRT bus rider since 2007, also commented on the proposed changes.

"The bus route redesign promised more frequent service in exchange for a little extra walking, but cutting off Route 62 service from Rush River (Drive) and moving the end of the route to the Nugget (shopping) center violates that principle because it's too far to walk from Rush River (Drive)," he said.

Hall also addressed his concern with the project, in relation to climate change.

"This plan comes at a time when the state and city will be adapting to climate change and need an RT system that has capacity to increase ridership, not cutting routes and hobbling the city's ability to adapt to changing conditions," he said.

Boyle addressed concerns pertaining to climate change and green issues.

"We're very much cognizant of those concerns, and we're planning in the future to electrify our entire fleet," he said. "So, we're definitely on board with the green initiative, and we're always looking to grow ridership and moving routes from one place to the other. It's difficult sometimes, but the hope is to increase ridership overall, and that's what we're trying to do."

Sacramento County Supervisor Patrick Kennedy, who serves as chair of the SacRT Board, called SacRT Forward "long overdue," considering that the agency had not undergone a comprehensive study



Levee Lessons from Our Levee Supervisor Dave Williams

By Patricia A. Clark

Dave Williams knows our Pocket Area levees better than we do. Williams is the Supervisor for levee maintenance for the California Department of Water Resources' (DWR) Maintenance Area 9 (MA 9), which is responsible for maintaining our levees. Williams has 22 years with the department, and 12 years as our area's supervisor. Williams and his crew of 4 work out of DWR's Sacramento Maintenance Yard in West Sacramento near Bryte. His maintenance crew's area covers Sacramento River levees from Sutterville Road downstream to Randall Island in the Delta, a significant swath of highly populated land in the state capital.

Due to the prioritization of public safety and the wisdom of learning what actions lead to levee failure over the last hundred years, we are fortunate that our levees have regulations designed to protect their integrity – and therefore to protect our public safety. Pocket Area levees are part of the State Plan of Flood Control, covering a large portion of the Central Valley, and the regulations covering these levees are enforced by a state agency called the Central Valley Flood Protection Board (CVFPB). Regulations govern what actions can be taken on levees and on land – including private land – near levees.

Regulations cover a variety of items including what type of vegetation (trees, shrubs, vegetable gardens) can be planted on or near a levee. Accessories like lighting or sprinklers are also included in the regulations for good reasons. Keeping levee slopes and the toe (bottom) of the levee clear of vegetation for visual inspection is critically important. Think of a dark night when it has been raining for a week and the DWR MA 9 levee patrols are out checking levees for seepage; they must be able to clearly see the levee slopes and toe without vegetation obstructing their view. The most common mistake Williams sees in the Pocket Area is vegetation on the levee slope or the toe. Lighting and other electrical items near a levee toe should be clearly marked at the shut-off location. As harmless as sprinklers may seem, if a sprinkler line breaks and the water flows for hours, it can erode a significant section of the levee putting your house and the entire community in danger. Williams suggests keeping sprinkler lines far away from levees and the water shut-off valve clearly marked so that it can be located and turned off if you are not home. Surprisingly, Williams has dealt with at least four of these emergencies in the last ten years.

Permits for some actions, if appropriate and safely installed, can be obtained through the CVFPB. More information on what homeowners are allowed to do near levees, as well as on the permit process, is available at on the CVFPB's website at cvfpb.ca.gov. Another important reason for the permit process is that DWR MA 9 crews, such as Williams' crew, know what to expect when they are working on a problem area. Permits are recorded in the levee logs so crews know exactly what should be at any particular location. Again, the important point to remember is that the regulations exist to protect levee integrity and our public safety.

DWR mows the grass on the levees twice a year. "We mow in the spring for fire and rodent control. We mow in the fall for fire and rodent control and most importantly for visual inspection during the winter," Williams said. Each mowing session takes about three weeks and the timing is dependent upon equipment availability and weather. "The levees need to be dry enough for us to mow and sometimes after a wet winter it takes a little longer for the levees to get dry enough," Williams added. The mowing equipment can be dangerous and Williams advises pedestrians on the levee to avoid the mowers in action. "It's only twice a year we come through with the mowers and I advise folks to keep their distance from the mowers," he added.

Rodents are a big threat to levees. "Keep vegetable gardens away from levees because they promote rodents," Williams advised. He points out that long-time Pocket Area residents are vigilant about spotting rodent holes in the levee and sending the information to him so his crew can fix the holes. Beavers and ground squirrels are the primary culprits, although beavers tend to make their dens on the water side of the levee. Squirrels are the most troublesome because they tend to make their burrows from the water side to the land side of the levee. Nutria, a large rodent recently spotted in San Joaquin County, poses a significant threat to levees but has not been seen in our area yet. Williams encourages folks to call or text him photos and location at 916-296-0181 when they see these rodent holes.

Another thing Williams advises residents to be on the lookout for is water seeping through, or under, the levee. The hard thing is to distinguish between "normal" and "unusual" seepage. Our area is in the old river bed and historically got water every winter; the ground is composed of layers of sand, rock and dirt and those stratas still have a tendency to seep when the river level gets high. Williams and long-time residents know the traditional locations that tend to seep; these locations are generally not dangerous. However, seepage at new or unusual locations should always be called in immediately so it can be checked out. Residents can call 911 if alarmed or they can call the DWR Flood Operations Center at 916-574-2619 if during a significant high-water event. "This is why we need to be able to see the levee slope, the toe, and into backyards against the levee to be able to evaluate the seepage and take appropriate action," Williams said.



One thing that has changed over the 22 years of Williams' career with DWR is the extent to which residents send a photo with their email or text. "I get a lot more photos and they are very helpful," Williams emphasized. "Sometimes the photo helps us locate the spot faster, sometimes the photo confirms that we already know about the concern they are writing about, but the photos are always good."

Still the most common mistake, prohibited vegetation on levee slopes or the toe of the levee violates the regulations and increases flood risk to our community. New residents who purchase a home next to the levee sometimes are not aware of the regulations or the public safety reason for them. Williams spends time talking to new residents and appreciates that some long-time Pocket residents take time to educate their new neighbors about levee safety.

What does Williams urge Pocket area residents to do? Learn how to use sandbags properly and that means filling sandbags only 1/3 full so they can be properly folded and stacked. Sign up for the emergency alert system in Sacramento County at www.sacramento-alert.org. In flood season, pay attention to media updates and if called on to evacuate, do it early. Finally, he encourages residents to come up and speak with his crew members when time permits.



Tommy Kono inducted into Sacramento Sports Hall of Fame



By LANCE ARMSTRONG

The Sacramento-born Tamio "Tommy" Kono, who gained worldwide fame in the sport of weightlifting, received special recognition.

Tommy, who died at the age of 85 in 2016,was inducted into the Sacramento Sports Hall of Fame on Jan. 26, 2019 at Thunder Valley Casino Resort's Pano Hall.

Also inducted into the 2019 Hall of Fame class were Chris Bosio (Major Baseball player and pitching coach), Lance Briggs (seven-time National League Football Pro Bowl linebacker with the Chicago Bears), Aaron Garcia (19-year Arena Football League quarterback and 1-year San Francisco 49ers quarterback) and Geoff Jenkins (World Series champion and MLB All-Star).

During his storied career, Tommy was a two-time Olympic champion and six-time world champion.

His Olympic gold medals were won in Helsinki in 1952 and Melbourne, Australia in 1956, and he earned an Olympic silver medal at the Olympic Games in Rome in 1960.

He was also a three-time Pan American Games champion and set 26 world records and seven Olympic records. His world records came in four separate weight classes.

Tommy, who is recognized as the sport's most decorated lifter, won 14 international medals.

Adding to his legacy, Tommy won body-building titles, the first of which was the Mr. World title in 1954. He also earned the title of Mr. Universe in 1955, 1957 and 1961.

In hearing the news about the Hall of Fame's decision to induct Tommy into its 2019 class, the Kono family expressed their gratitude.

"We are excited and humbled that Tommy will be inducted into the Sacramento Sports Hall of Fame," the family said. "We are grateful to the fans of the sport of weightlifting for their support and remembrance of him. It is a very special feeling to know that his hometown of Sacramento has bestowed this honor upon him."

Prior to becoming a legendary weightlifter, Tommy grew up at 217 M Street (now Capitol Mall) in Sacramento's Japantown.

The 1940 federal census lists Tommy's parents as Kanichi and Ichimi Kono, and his brothers as John, Mike and Frank Kono.

During his childhood, Tommy's physique was far different than what it would become in his young adult life.

When he was 11 years old, he stood 4 feet, 8 inches tall and weighed 74 pounds.

The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941 led to a much different life for Tommy and his family.

On Feb. 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which allowed for the assembly, evacuation and relocation of more than 100,000 men, women and children of Japanese ancestry residing on the West Coast.

While living at the Tule Lake internment camp with his family during World War II, Tommy began lifting weights from a barbell set that was purchased with money raised by interned Japanese residents.

Following the war, the Kono family returned to Sacramento, where Tommy continued to workout with weights at the YMCA at 505 J St.

During his senior year at Sacramento High School in 1948, Tommy participated in his first weightlifting competition.

An article in the Nov. 30, 1949 edition of The Sacramento Bee refers to Tommy as the "Pacific Coast champion and state record holder in the 148-pound class."

Tommy continued to strengthen his body and enter competitions while attending Sacramento Junior College – now Sacramento City College.

Tommy was drafted to serve in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, but was allowed to remain a civilian in Sacramento due to his status as a potential Olympian.

With that deferment, Tommy would enter into international weightlifting competitions.

In 1963, the Teenage Open Amateur Athletic Union Weightlifting Tournament at Sacramento High School was renamed the Tommy Kono Championships.

Another annual competition, the Tommy Kono Open, was first held at Sacramento High School in 2006.

Among Tommy's other activities in Sacramento was working for the California Department of Motor Vehicles.

Tommy's time as a professional weightlifter came to an end in 1965, a year after he experienced a knee injury that kept him out of the 1964 Summer Olympics.

However, he remained with the sport, coaching the Mexican Olympic team in 1968, the West German Olympic team in 1972 and the U.S. Olympic team in 1976.

After becoming a resident of Honolulu in the 1970s, Tommy acquired employment as a fitness coordinator with that city's parks and recreation department.

Bill Kutzer, a former football coach at California State University, Sacramento, said that he met Tommy while working with a weightlifting team on the campus of that institution.

"Whenever he came over from Honolulu, he would always come by our weight room and visit and share advice with me and some of my lifters," said Kutzer, whose 1978 dissertation at Brigham Young University was on the history of Olympic weightlifting in the U.S. "He was generous and sharing of his information and time, and just a very gracious man."

Despite his death, Tommy's legacy continues through various honors, including being inducted into the International Weightlifting Hall of Fame and the Hawaii Sports Hall of Fame.

Additionally, the International Weightlifting Federation, in 2005, named Tommy the "Lifter of the Century."

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Portuguese baking with Jeremiah



By Monica Stark

As a light rain passed through the valley, the warmth of a hot oven and cozy kitchen helped set the stage for Portuguese pastry baking that perfect evening, Friday, March 22, as the sound of Fado, or the Portuguese blues added to the ambiance inside the Pocket neighborhood home of Jeremiah Duarte Bills.

Growing up in a "dessert-obsessed family," Jeremiah brings his Portuguese heritage front and center in the heart of his home, teaching bakers and food lovers the ins and outs of creating such delicacies as tarte de amêndoa (Portuguese almond tart), queijadas de laranja (little Portuguese orange custardy tarts with dashes of cinnamon), pastéis de nata (custard tart, a favorite in Lisbon), bolo de bolacha (a traditional Portuguese dessert made with Maria biscuit, rich coffee, and buttercream).

In an intimate demonstration style class with plenty of hands-on participation, classes are limited to six students. In the midst of his cooking classes, Jeremiah offers historical and cultural context, as well as personal experiences he's encountered during trips to Portugal for vacations and research.

From cultural tidbits such as the origin of the Portuguese word for spatula, Salazar, named after António de Oliveira Salazar, the dictator who ruled Portugal for 40 years and "scraped the country for all its worth" – to the cloistered nuns of the 1500s who learned how to make large swaths of paper thin dough with a filling and a drizzle of butter, Jeremiah's passion for the Portuguese culture contagiously seeps into cooking lessons.

Speaking of his adventure touring a convent during one of his cooking classes as a student, he said, "It's like a Middle Eastern pastry, really. It's the same idea. But, you have to think. We have that kind of dough like strudel dough (which originated in Austria), and filo dough (rooted in the Ottomon cuisine), and then this tiny little place in Portugal figured out how to do it by these nuns living on their own. It's like a miracle. And watching it, was like, I'm witnessing a total miracle."

Not originally from the Pocket, Jeremiah said he learned of the Portuguese historical impact on the area after he moved here. A beautiful happenstance, Jeremiah now is on the board of the Sacramento Portuguese Historical and Cultural Society and looks to make more neighborhood connections.

In 2016, Jeremiah appeared on ABC's The Great American Baking Show where he baked many Portuguese recipes. This experience connected him to people all over the world hungry to learn about Portuguese dessert recipes. He has collaborated and created recipes for many Portuguese American companies including UMA CASA Restaurant, Ginja9 Cherry Liqueur, and Rooster Camisa. His test kitchen also serves as home base for testing traditional Portuguese dessert recipes for his upcoming book, "Portuguese Desserts", which of course, will also include histories and stories. Portuguese Desserts' extensive and exhaustive collection of recipes are adapted for the American kitchen and include recipes from continental Portugal, the islands of the Azores, Madeira as well as the Luso (Portuguese speaking) world.

With about 3,300 followers on Instagram, Jeremiah says he loves being connected and sharing his talent, but that book agents seem obsessed with the 50,000 follower mark. Despite that trend, one agent has expressed interested, though nothing has been signed as of yet. Because anyone can "Google" recipes, the agent explicitly encouraged him to include stories. "I was happy she was into that because it's more of an artistic project," he said. "I like those books, too, and it's totally true, we have access to almost everything these days."

And with that side note during this class, he turned, rose his voice and said, "Look at you guys. You guys are amazing. Good work."

When he dismissed himself to package goodies in take-home boxes for his students, one of them described the class as a "creativity and culture class, and you get to eat too. All the good things in life."

Jeremiah's creative and cultural talent does not stop with cooking, his background is in music. He attended the world-famous Juilliard School and performed as an orchestral flutist all over the world. He keeps bees, and also teaches aspiring flute and piano students.

As he said when discussing the intricacies of Fado, "Portuguese love poetry, and music is like food. You get it no matter what. If you don't speak the language it doesn't matter."

Follow him on Instagram or Facebook. Perhaps, look for a food column in this publication at a later date.





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Lunar New Year cooking with Mollie and Elizabeth



By Monica Stark

A mere two-and-half decades apart in age, Mollie Chow, 90, and Elizabeth Wong, 65, celebrated Lunar New Year the old-fashioned way – by cooking Jai, the traditional vegetarian delight inside "Auntie Mollie's" home on Arabella Way in the Pocket neighborhood.

Putting their heart and soul into a laborious tradition that seems to be fading away, watching Elizabeth and Mollie prepare the ingredients was like watching a cooking show on PBS. "I'm 65 years old," says Elizabeth. "(My friends) don't get it. They said their parents used to cook it but that they haven't had it in years; going to the restaurant is not the same. The tradition is about gathering your friends, shopping for the ingredients, and preparing them."

Donning custom-made aprons from San Francisco's Chinatown, and preparing the ingredients, they did. Mollie's kitchen counter displayed bowls of including (but not limited to) carrots, lotus root, ginger, garlic, various fungi, noodles, ginkgo nuts, mushroom, and, of course, the magic ingredient: fresh water chestnuts (which Elizabeth peels with a meat clever because a vegetable peeler won't work because the skin is too thick).

Trying to describe the dish, in so many words, Elizabeth said, it's not really a stew (even though that's what recipes tend to call it); it's more like a goulash, but don't call it a goulash. "It's a vegetarian delight."

"The preparation is very intense, but it's fun," Elizabeth said. So, every other year, she finds "foodies" who are interested in preparing the dish. "One's Jewish, one's Irish, one's Filipina, one's American-born." But this year she asked her friend, Mollie, who she befriended last year at a local mahjong group. Besides mahjong, their friendship surrounded food, as they'd often grab a bite to eat nearby after a session. When talking about the idea of joining forces to make jai, Mollie told her, "I can't see too well, but I've got my ingredients." Well, Elizabeth had hers, too, spawning discussions and debate over preparations.

"I said, 'how old are your ingredients?' (Mollie responded): 'Some are 60 years old.'" And Elizabeth said hers were only 50. And, no they don't get sick from it. Every year, they bounce back and Elizabeth ends up talking about it.

And with Mollie having five more ingredients on her recipe list than Elizabeth, they wondered if Valley Community Newspapers should print the recipe with this article. But, as Elizabeth says, "We can't even imagine what they are because we are counting them on our fingers."

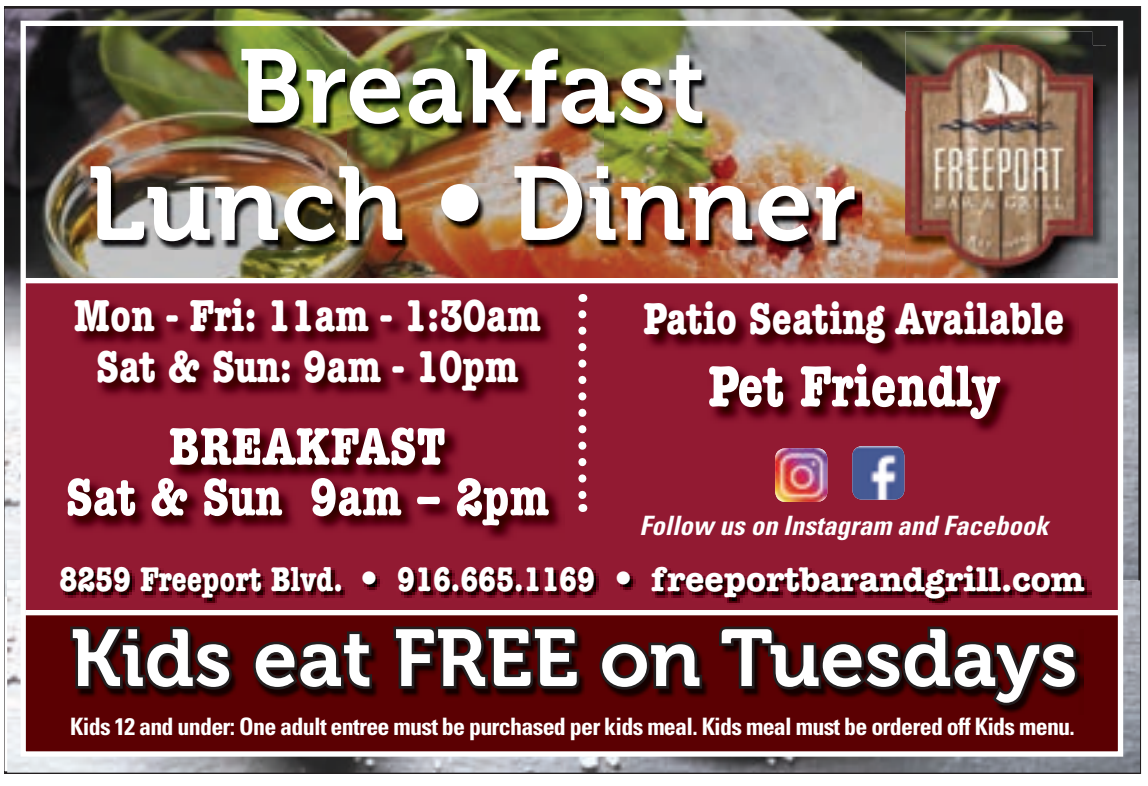
"That, to me, that's really Chinese New Year," she added. And for Mollie to be so excited – that, in and of itself is worth preserving. Short of driving, Mollie wears makeup, goes to Jazzercise, plays games,

hosts a party once a month, and her home décor is what Elizabeth likens to "antiques galore."

On Mollie's kitchen counter was a picture of a "Kitchen God." According to legend it's believed that on the 23rd day of the 12th lunar month, just before Chinese New Year, the Kitchen God returns to Heaven to

see COOKING page 13





Train advocates continue fight to protect train tracks on Del Rio Trail site

By LANCE ARMSTRONG

Train advocates continued their fight to prevent the removal of portions of a historic railroad along that project site for the Del Rio Trail.

The city's proposed, 4.8-mile, inner-city trail would run south through the Land Park, South Land Park, Freeport Manor, Z'Berg, Pocket and Meadowview neighborhoods, between Interstate 5 and Freeport Boulevard.

The purpose of the trail would be to provide a convenient thoroughfare for cyclists, pedestrians, joggers and dog walkers to travel to parks, retail centers, schools and jobs.

Its creation also supports the city's goal to increase possibilities for Sacramentans to be more active and healthy, while protecting the environment. The trail would allow for alternative transportation outside of driving on freeways and boulevards.

Included among the plans for the trail project is the removal of segments of the historic Sacramento Southern Railroad's Walnut Grove Branch Line.

Historically, this railroad operated in the area of the present day, proposed trail, and altogether extended about 33 miles from Old Sacramento to the town of Isleton. That line began its operation in 1909. It was extended to Isleton in 1929, and was abandoned entirely in 1978.

The existing tracks along the proposed trail are not currently suitable for train use. The mostly intact tracks include sections that have been paved over and damaged, and in other cases removed.

At one point along the site, near Del Rio Road and Normandy Lane, a steel, railroad rail protrudes above the ground.

California State Parks currently runs an excursion train along the old Sacramento Southern route from Old Sacramento to just north of Sutterville Road.

A proposal to have excursions depart from near the town of Freeport to the town of Hood is part of the approved Old Sacramento State Historic Park General Plan.

Sacramento attorney Osha Meserve, counsel for the rail proponent group, said that the railroad line's heritage extends beyond railroad history.

"The rail group is asking the city to protect the Walnut Grove Branch Line as a working railroad to help keep this region's farm-to-fork heritage alive, as emblazoned on the Freeport water tower," she said.

Paul Helman, a docent for the California State Railroad Museum, which is a unit of the Old Sacramento State Historic Park, is among the proponents of the preservation of the historic railroad.

Helman described the difficulty that those train proponents are facing.

"(The state) doesn't own the property (along the trail), so we can't make a plan for something we don't own," he said. "All you need is 1 foot (of the track) removed and (the plan to carry out the proposed southern excursion train) is rendered useless."

Volunteers repaired about 3,000 feet of track of the railroad, north of Sutterville Road, in 2017 and 2018.

Helman said that if the council approves the Del Rio Trail project in the March 12 meeting, proponents of preserving the railroad along the proposed trail and beyond will continue their fight.

"We're not going away," he said. "We'll look at our other options."

Brian Ebbert, past-president of the South Land Park Neighborhood Association, told the Pocket News that his organization is opposed to any future train traffic on the old rail corridor.

"We've issued letters to that effect, and we have letters from Assembly Member (Kevin) McCarty, Assembly Member (Jim) Cooper and Congresswoman (Doris) Matsui also opposing any future train traffic on that corridor, and supporting conversion of that corridor to a biking and walking trail," he said.

Ebbert added that the community at-large is also opposed to reactivating the old rail corridor.

He claimed that that train activity in that area would result in "huge negative impacts" on the community.

"(The operation of trains in the area would introduce) air pollution, ground vibration, install crossing arms across eight streets in South Land Park, 110

See TRAIN page 10

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Train:

continued from page 9

decibel horn blasts at intersections," he said.

"We're talking about an abandoned rail corridor that now travels past preschools and very close to homes that were built right up next to the tracks. And, quite frankly, (the tracks) have been abandoned for over 40 years and (the proposed trail area is) utilized as a community greenbelt and walking path, biking path and jogging path, currently."

He also stated that locomotives running alongside a trail with children is not a positive combination.

"(There would be) unsafe conditions that would be created by having huge locomotives lumbering next to children as they're biking to school or to their neighborhood playground or to the library or to (William) Land Park or to the zoo," he said.

Also a concern to the association are potential impacts on traffic.

"(There are) concerns about tying up traffic on these major arteries – Pocket Road, Florin Road, Fruitridge Road, Sutterville (Road)," he said.

Ebbert mentioned that the association also rejects the proposal to operate train excursions (along the trail site), as opposed to running a train for transportation purposes.

"It's for an amusement ride," he said. "So, you want to impact thousands of lives to have a government sponsored tourist attraction in people's backyards, and that's just not acceptable."

Helman noted that there is no intention to run excursion trains through South Land Park.

"(Excursion trains run) through the stretch that goes to Sutterville Road, but not excursions on this four and a half mile (area of the proposed trail)," he said.

Helman added that the trail route would only be used for maintenance trains that would run through the area about every two to three weeks.

"The easiest way to have a completed rail is go right down on a very infrequent basis to take the locomotives and equipment to the Freeport area, and that's where they store it," he said.

Despite their opposition to having trains run through the trail area, the association supports rail history, Ebbert said.

"We would like the 5-mile-long bike and pedestrian trail to (celebrate) the old rail history," he said. "We can have historical signage along the way, maybe even some old rail artifacts included as part of the exhibits or public art.

"We have all sorts of ideas to honor the rail heritage of Sacramento without running vintage locomotives next to preschools and homes."

Joe Flores became the first Mexican American president of the South Land Park Neighborhood Association

By Monica Stark

On March 20, the South Land Park Neighborhood Association hosted its annual neighborhood meeting at Pony Express School, ending the 3-year presidency of Brian Ebbert. The SLPNA board voted their new executive team at the April board meeting. At that time, current SLPNA Vice President Joe Flores officially became the next president, while simultaneously into his second year as the Chair of the Parks & Recreation Commission. He is the first Mexican American to hold these seats.

Living in a progressive community where the church on the corner makes national headlines, promoting the message of 'love ALL of your neighbors', becoming the first Mexican American Neighborhood Association President where African Americans and women have previously served, Flores says, is a reflection of how diverse our neighborhood truly is.

"At the Mayor's State of the City, he shared a story of past racism within South Land Park during a time that I wasn't even born yet," says Flores. "This is not the South Land Park I know of today. I love that I live in a neighborhood, where many cultures are celebrated and supported. Every Friday night, I enjoy dinner with my family, while mariachis play."

Last October, Barrio Café hosted a Día de los Muertos themed block party, where his son got his face painted like Miguel from Pixar's Coco. (Weeks) ago, my family enjoyed the fire crackers and Dragon Dancers at SF Supermarket in celebration of Chinese New Year."

Honored that both the SLPNA Board and Park Commissioners have chosen him to represent them due to his advocacy in South Land Park and across District 5, Flores says it is also a badge of honor to be the first Mexican American Chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission when he is in spaces where the topic of diversity is discussed. In fact, he wrote the City's benchmarks on diversity back in 2016.

When he first joined the board in 2016, he became the Communications Sub-Committee Chair, where he's in charge of all social media and email messaging platforms. Proud to have organically grow the number of subscribers to these feeds to keep our neighbors informed across all issues that affects our neighborhood, he also curates and publish the SLPNA Annual Newsletter. He's the man behind the whimsical fun neighborhood 'Yard of the Month' contests, where neighbors win South Land Park Business Area gift cards and social media postings. In October, 2018, he cohosted the Reichmuth Park Disk Golf Appreciation Day to highlight the City of Sacramento multi-use Parks and its amenities. The Appreciation Day also sought to highlight what a successful example of an 'Adopt-a-Park' by a community group looks like. The Capitol City Flyers Disk Golf Club players are our extra eyes and ears at Reichmuth Park, and last summer, there were several trees that caught fire in the Nature Area, they were the first to run across to Fire Station 13 for the fire fighters to extinguish. The Sacramento Police Department released a report last October that indicated since the installation of the disk golf equipment, calls of service and other negative crime statistics have reduced, a direct a correlation to the many disk golfers that come and play at our park. "Changing the perception that Reichmuth Park is not safe has been rewarding," he says.

Under Ebbert's tenure as President where he sought to raise SLPNA's profile, Flores plans to expand it and to permanently estab-

see FLORES page 13



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Special Olympics hosted unified track and field day at Kennedy

By Monica Stark

About 150 students in special education and general education programs converged for the Special Olympics Schools Track & Field Event on Friday, May 3, at John F. Kennedy High School.

Special education students had the opportunity to compete in Special Olympics track and field events and earned medals for their accomplishments. General education students joined in as volunteers and Unified Partners, competed with their special education peers on the same relays.

Events included meter runs, jumps and throws. Special education students received medals and worked with general education teammates and volunteers. Opening Ceremony included a parade of athletes, athlete oath and national anthem.

Students hailed from schools from Sac City Unified School District and San Juan Unified School District, including John F. Kennedy, Bowling Green, Rosa Parks, Burbank, Burbank Transition Program, Mira Loma, and Laurel Ruff.

Some top athletes this year are Colin Bell, Albert Stuckey, and Natalie. Albert ran the mile, Colin, the 50m and 100m dash and Natalie competed in the assisted walk and wheel chair race. Past athletes have competed in many of the same events and many came and watched the event to support the next wave of runners.

Chloe Stidger, a teacher at JFK, explained that in the past Burbank has hosted the event, and this year Kennedy was chosen because the field was available. While this was the first year Kennedy hosted the track and field event, this was not their first Special Olympics Partnership event. Kennedy hosts the soccer event in the fall and will share hosting the track and field event. Many of the students ride a school bus to school, and so having the event during the school day, enabling the students' attendance.

Stidger explained that staff go above and beyond for this event. Volunteers on campus included Kennedy students from Link Crew, Student Government, Color Guard, Band, the Cheer Team, Police, and seniors who have helped with soccer and who wanted to continue to help. Adapted PE coach



George Zinner reaches out to all the schools, goes to each campus to help train, puts the students in their heats, and helps with day-of responsibilities. Greg Polo, the teacher at Burbank who has hosted this event in the past, also provided with much needed help. Cathy Stidger reached out to Special Olympics and got all the paperwork together for this event, while Chloe Stidger did all the set up and break down and coordinated the student volunteers. "Without this team, these events would never happen and our students would not have access," Chloe Stidger said.

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Cooking:

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report the activities of every household over the past year to Yu Huang, the Jade Emperor. The Jade Emperor, emperor of the heavens, either rewards or punishes on the family's yearly report.

At Elizabeth's parents' home growing up, she said because her mother was disabled, her father would bring the Buddha statue downstairs for the Lunar New Year dinner. "We called him the 'Basement Buddha'" she said.

In keeping with the Buddhist tradition, the significance of the first meal of the year being vegetarian is not to take a life. The meal is traditionally prepped the night before and on New Year's Day, there is to be "no cutting", no " use of the scissors," no sweeping.

"You can't shower, but you do cut your hair the day before," Elizabeth said. "Last year, I tried to find a place to cut my hair the day before new years; a lot of beauty shops were booked."

Asked what the significance of those traditions, Mollie said she'd ask her mother that question and her mom would say, "Just do it." And Elizabeth agreed, in laughter: "Just do it."

Fifteen years ago, Elizabeth said The Sacramento Bee sent a reporter and a photographer to follow her and her friends for four hours to gather the ingredients. Then after they gathered it, they asked when would it be cooked? The answer, that night for the following day and then it takes even longer to cook. So, the Bee staff asked how they were going to taste it. Elizabeth found a restaurant that uses 10 of the ingredients that she would have used.

"We were talking about not only the ingredients but how we celebrate, what's the meaning of it. That, to me, is really what new years is about," Elizabeth said.

Flores:

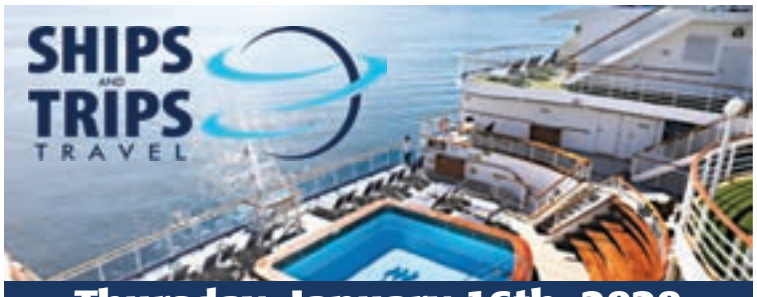
continued from page 11

lish as an exemplary example of what a neighborhood association should be. During his vice presidency, he sought and created partnerships with other neighborhood associations including the Land Park Community Association and the Pocket Greenhaven Community Association. "Brian and I cohosted a Beer Summit at Giovanni's Pizzeria last year with the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Hollywood Park Neighborhood Association and Golf Course Terrance Estates Neighborhood Association where we discuss our top three issues affecting our neighborhoods and to assist each other in our endeavors. Turned out, our adjacent three neighborhoods have more issues in common that we initially thought and that lead to partnerships to address them like the Freeport Boulevard Transportation Safety Committee with Hollywood Park. I seek to create new partnerships, for example an upcoming Coffee Summit with the new President of the Sierra Curtis Neighborhood Association to collaborate on co-hosting hiring events for our neighbors for the new Curtis Park Safeway grocery store and the upcoming flagship Raley's grocery store on Freeport Boulevard."

For years, the Del Rio Trial Project has been a positive catalyst project that has engaged neighbors where they have become knowledgeable on the many aspects of the process with City and State. "As we are headed toward the endgame of the project, I don't want to lose the momentum of our neighbors' engagement and to create and maintain new annual neighborhood events, for example the well-attended Block Party we hosted with Barrio Café last September. We are working with other South Land Park partners to host the next community Block Party this May and again in September," he says.

Asked about top issues facing the neighborhood, he says cannabis and the incoming businesses to the Industrial Park area of our neighborhood will continue be an issue as businesses begin to fully operate. "We will have to keep a vigil eye and respond to any unforeseen externalities of this emerging business and to also be ready to celebrate the positives as well."

Some cannabis business representatives have visited SLPNA Board Meetings and they indicated that they want a positive relationship with the neighborhood, and this will be an aspect of SLPNA to monitor their accountability, he says. He assures that SLPNA will continue to have open dialogue with the City to make recommendations and policy requests for the cannabis industry to operate within South Land Park appropriately.



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Modern-Day Portuguese Festival Dates Back to Middle Ages

By Joe Perfecto

The story of California is very much one of diversity. The current-day state was built—literally—by a variety of ethnic groups hailing from all parts of the globe. As prominent as any of the threads woven throughout this social and historic tapestry were the immigrants from the age-old nation of Portugal, who brought their skills as farmers, fishermen, merchants and more to the American west coast. Arriving primarily from the Azores and Madeira in large waves both prior to the gold rush and at the dawn of the 20th century, these immigrants also brought long-standing cultural traditions that are still observed from Seattle to San Diego.



One such tradition is the Catholic-faith-based Holy Spirit Festa (festival), which originated in mainland Portugal in the early 14th century due to support from King Dom Dinis and Queen Isabel. So great was Isabel's support that core aspects of the contemporary festa commemorate her actions on behalf of her people, and so great was their love of the queen that she was considered a saint during her lifetime, nearly 300 years before she was finally canonized.

Born into Spanish royalty, Isabel was highly devout and devoted to the Holy Spirit from an early age. She consistently drew on her resources to benefit the sick and poor, even regularly culling food from the royal stores to distribute to the needy, which she did by stealth due to the king's disapproval. This practice resulted in the legendary apron of roses incident: legend has it that one day she attempted to slip out of the castle with her apron bulging with bread for the poor when the king accosted her and demanded to know what was in her bundle. She claimed she was carrying roses, and although they were not in season, when she opened the apron it was indeed such flowers that tumbled out.

Today's practice of placing a small loaf of bread at each seat at the festa meal hearkens back to Isabel's giving of bread to the poor. Similarly, in keeping with the past, festa meals feature the traditional Sopas de Carne (beef soup) dish made with hearty meat and dried French bread swimming in rich broth, which is offered free to all comers.

When Portugal was in the grips of widespread famine, Isabel prayed to the Holy Spirit for relief; shortly thereafter ships arrived at Lisbon bearing foodstuffs that saved the country. She then summoned the populace to cele-

see FESTIVAL page 18

South Land Park residents look to current Zoo site, Bing Maloney for future botanical garden

By Monica Stark

Bruce Ritter and Linda Ching live in a tropical South Land Park Shangri-la. Sunshine filters through the palms, as their dog Kiwi frolics among the cycads, the palmettos and the leucospermums. A pond sits nestled in the back as gingers and staghorn ferns dot the landscape.

A garden 10 years in the making, and the pair wants to push the limits and give back to Sacramento with a public, large-scale botanical garden that they hope will not only be a place of respite and enjoyment for locals but a destination for travelers, as well.

Bruce, a botany major turned optometrist, met Linda in optometry school at SUNY College of Optometry in New York City years ago, but never lost his love for Linda or for plants. As they lived cross country from each other, Bruce spent much of his free time working in his own yard and at a local arboretum. He even built his own 500-square-foot greenhouse with a 16-foot peak, cold running water, and banana trees inside.

"I loved all the tropical stuff, especially in New York where you don't see any of that stuff. And then I got here and I said, 'wow, I can do all these cool things.'"

A fairy tale come true in the decades-long courting, they reunited and Bruce moved from Mt. Sinai, New York to sunny Sacramento about 10 years ago. And Linda finds it quite ironic that it took a New Yorker to get a botanical garden started in Sacramento.

Replies Bruce: "It's in her blood, she just didn't realize it."

Growing up on South Land Park Drive, Linda's father had 17 fruit trees, grafted oranges and convinced the then-city council to use the land behind the retaining wall on his back property line to grow long Chinese beans, giant melons and an almond tree.

After two marriages, she met Bruce on 24th Street and Park Avenue in Manhattan and suffice to say he wasn't going to let her go this time. Meanwhile, he's never lost his love for plants, and now, they've been at this botanical garden planning for about a year, Linda says.

But really, she would be the first to tell you that's she's generally not all that interested in plants. And yet, despite her ambivalence, she is all in. She sees having a botanical garden in Sacramento as a gift to the community and also to visitors. She is particularly thrilled with the idea of creating a Chinese garden, similar to the Lan Su Chinese Garden in Portland, which will recognize the great contributions of the Chinese to our city.

Relatively new on their radar, the idea of a botanical garden first surfaced over a good meal with friends who asked Bruce, "Why doesn't Sacramen-

see GARDEN page 17

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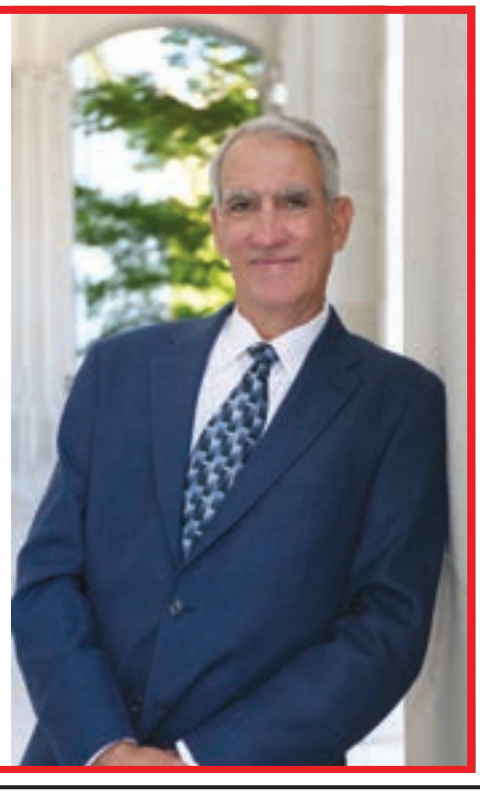

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Garden:

continued from page 14

to have a botanical garden?" And they went on, and on dreaming about what kinds of plants and exhibits they'd have, as well as the events they'd hold. An orchid ball? Weddings? Intimate concerts? Field trips? Giant waterlilies? Tactile gardens? A ceremonial cutting of the "stinky plant"? Seemingly endless, plans for the world-class botanical garden feature a half-acre solar-powered conservatory with an orchid collection, palms, a farm-to-fork gourmet restaurant, a gift shop featuring work of local artists and craftsmen, an annual "art in the garden" event,

water features, a formal garden, demonstration garden, a plant nursery, and as Bruce said, all those "amazing things you'll see in Hawaii or Burma but not here."

To facilitate the materialization of their vision, in February, 2019, the couple formed a board of directors, including a financial director, Jesse Avitia; a landscape architect/head of American River College's Horticulture Department, Cielo Sichi; and Marlene Simon, the "Plant Lady," from Good Day Sacramento. They have formed a non-profit and have received federal non-profit approval and have started a website, www.SacBo.org, and a Facebook page (Sacramento Botanical Gardens).

Now, a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation, donations to The Sacramento Botanical Garden will pay for the building of the garden and structures as well as the acquisition of plants.

"Listen," Bruce says, "I like plants, I want a botanical garden, but I also look at it as they're always talking about making Sacramento a destination city. We need destinations... We want to create a place for tourists, for them to see and for people who live here to have a place to go and enjoy themselves and maybe go try and grow it in their own backyard."

It's only fitting the Camellia capital of the world since 1910 will have a botanical garden someday. Members of local garden clubs are drawn to hear Bruce and Linda speak about their vision. They spoke to a crowd of 33 members of the Land Park Garden Club and were invited to a South Natomas Urban Greenery meeting at former mayor Heather Fargo's house.

Their original excitement was fueled by an article in the Sacramento Bee which stated that the nine-hole Land Park Golf Course was not turning a profit. Because it already had rolling hills, big trees, parking, water, and a well, they began to envision a garden paradise in the perfect spot. Linda was running into gardeners on the streets, at the elementary school where her children had attended.

Bruce and Linda believe the fate of the Sacramento Botanical Garden is tied to that of the Sacramento Zoo. As the Zoo considers sites like the old King's arena or Bing Maloney Golf Course for its relocation, Bruce and Linda are raising funds so that when the time comes for the Zoo to move, they'll be ready.

They said if the Zoo moves to North Natomas, they hope to end up in the current Zoo spot, but if the Zoo moves to Bing Maloney, they hope to share the acreage, giving them about 40 acres, a much larger lot than if they took over the current Zoo location.

Asked if he had a preferred location, Bruce said, "The reality is I want the place the city is willing to give me. Where the city wants to put it, that would be my favorite place. The zoo is great because it's got all the buildings, it's got the restaurant, the restrooms, a canopy of trees. But at 14 and a half acres it's relatively small. Most botanical gardens are 30 to 100 acres, and some are 300 acres."

While there would be more acreage at Bing Maloney, the current Zoo location features a restaurant, landscaping, multiple buildings, and its own well on site which combined would save millions of dollars. They estimate if they moved to Bing Maloney, they'd have to raise $50 million for the construction of needed buildings. On the other hand, an estimated cost for opening the garden at the current Zoo location would amount to $25. "Some unnamed sources have said we could do it for a lot less than $25 million (at the current zoo location) but if we keep a budget for $25 million, we could make this phenomenal garden," Bruce says.

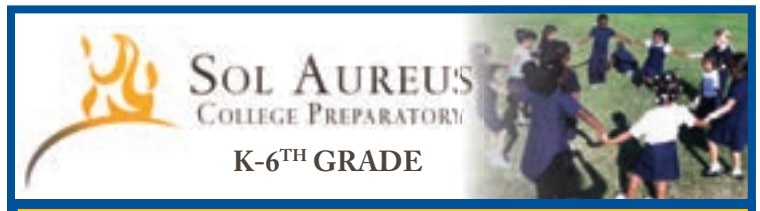
A major cost saving measure would be to tap into a volunteer gardener powerhouse. Bruce points Whangarei Quarry Gardens, a subtropical oasis created by volunteers in the remnants of a former quarry in Northland, New Zealand. "Volunteers built that garden into a really nice botanical gardens. They had to get money for its structures, but otherwise all volunteers," he said. "The City does help pay the salaries for the employees. Admission is free. And it only has six employees; everyone else is a volunteer and it works."

Garnering grassroots financial support they hope with the thousands of gardeners in our city, people will contribute to latte a month club, whereby $5 gets taken out of your account each month and goes to the general fund. "If we get 10,000 people doing that, that amounts to real money. I figured at the end of the year that they get a coupon for coming into the coffee shop and getting a free latte," adds Bruce.

Financials aside, the biggest hurdle is finding a place to put in a breathtaking garden. In conclusion, as Linda says, "99% of the people we have talked to are supportive of the concept of bringing a botanical garden to Sacramento. We hope that your office will become our advocate to turn our dream into reality."

Payments are accepted through Pay Pal if you're interested in donating to the Sacramento Botanical Garden nonprofit 501(c)3. For more information, visit www.SacBo.org or email info@sacbo.org.





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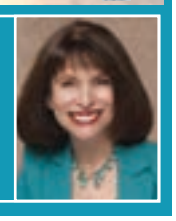

Pocket-Greenhaven Community Association Showcased Master Gardeners at Their 4th Annual Crop Swap Event

By Jan Dalske

The 4th Annual Crop Swap took place in front of the Robbie Waters Library on Gloria Drive. It was a very hot summer day, and the participants were happy to display the "fruits of their labors" on tables set up in front of the library. The idea was to bring something you have grown in your home garden and share it with your neighbors.

Barbara was happy to display her crops on the outdoor tables. She had small Cucumbers, which could be easily pickled, on display. She also grows Chard, and Basil. Her tender Sweet Peas, as well as Zucchinis, and Yellow Tomatoes, and other "succulents" are healthy treats during the hot summer months.

Linda and Frankie were there with a large selection of Jade plants to share with anyone who was interested. Nicole had many succulents, and fresh Mint, and Basil as well as Geranium plants. She also offered fresh cucumbers, tomatoes, and cherry tomatoes for a wonderful summer salad treat.

Michael, and Rosella, who is proud to have been a Master Gardener for twelve years, had many varieties of Beans: String, Blue, Burgundy, and Asian Long Beans. The couple also had pluots, tomatoes, yellow and green zucchini, and Armenian cucumbers. This year they grew pumpkins, acorn squash, kuhota squash, watermelon, eggplant, three different kinds of peppers, and spinach. They have thirty different kinds of fruit trees on their property and also grow grapes and kiwi.

"The Pocket/Greenhaven Community Association has been hosting a local crop swap for the last 4 years. We are very happy to have brought together 35 neighbors at our most recent crop swap to exchange extra produce and talk gardening. We will be hosting another crop swap soon and if you would like to join us you can contact us at info@pocketgreenhaven.org.," said Will Cannady, president of the PGCA.

There is also a community garden located behind the parking area at the Robbie Waters Library.

"District 7 Parks Commissioner Devin Lavelle helped with the logistics of the garden and I had the pleasure of organizing neighbors in support of the project. Currently Bill Maynard with the City of Sacramento oversees our community garden as well as all the other community gardens in Sacramento. We still have a few plots available. If people are interested in a plot please have them email me at willcannady@gmail.com and we can schedule a time to sign up for a plot."



The City's recently completed Sojourner Truth Community Garden is the end result of local community members coming together over the last five years with a dream of being able to work the soil together. Councilmember Jennings and his Chief of Staff Dennis Rogers worked closely with community members to make their goal of a community garden become a reality. You can contact Bill at wmaynard@cityofsac.org

Festival:

continued from page 14

brate Mass in the royal chapel. During the service she selected a peasant from the crowd and had the bishop hand him the royal scepter and adorn him with the royal crown, in fulfillment of her promise in prayer that she would give her crown to the ceremony if the famine ended. For this reason the crown is symbolic of the Holy Spirit dogma and features prominently in festa activities and icons.

The festa tradition quickly became established in the newly-settled Azores during the following century (ca. 1430-1440), and it is these islands to which today's US festivals can be traced. Many participants are emigrants from the islands and/or descendants of emigrants; some families have been involved in these celebrations for more than five generations.

Although the Portuguese are found across the US, they are highly numerous in this state, as are the Holy Spirit societies that present annual festas through much of the year. Among the local groups are the SES of Elk Grove, the IDES of Freeport/Clarksburg and the SPHSS of Sacramento. The latter operates a church and hall on Pocket Rd. and has presented (previously as AADES) an annual festa for about 120 years; the latest took place June 8-9.

A typical festa involves a parade featuring members of varying Holy Spirit societies bearing flags and richly-colored society banners, as well as junior and senior queens and sidemaids adorned in exquisite, ornately-embroidered and bejeweled royal capes and gowns; the parade precedes or follows (or both) a Mass at the Portuguese church. Once the parade reaches the hall grounds, the ceremonial release of the white dove(s) is performed by the royal court. There may be a barbecue on the day before the traditional Sopas meals. There are games of chance such as bingo and the raffle-like quermesse ("roll-up") in which participants buy small rolls of paper that are then unfurled; if blank, nothing is won, but any piece bearing a numeral wins a prize. A standard raffle will often feature unusual items such as homemade Portuguese confections, textiles and wine/spirits. Speaking of which, there's always a well-stocked bar on site.

The umbrella PFSA organization (Portuguese Fraternal Society of America) offers a schedule of festas held throughout the state at https://www.mypfsa.org/news/festas/#/.

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Pocket, Land Park centenarians honored at special event

By LANCE ARMSTRONG

Fifteen centenarians from mostly the Pocket and Land Park areas were celebrated during a special event held at the Sacramento Asian Sports Foundation in Elk Grove, was presented by the Pocket area's ACC Senior Services.

A highlight of the event was the presentation of Keys to the City to the attending centenarians by a representative of the office of Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg. One of the honored guests was unable to attend the event.

Among the highlighted centenarians was Pocket area resident Fran Jaksich, who was impressed by the number of people at the event who were born 100 years ago or more.

"I have never even seen 20 or 10 or five (centenarians at the same time)," she said. "I didn't know there were that many around."

Jaksich was asked to share her secret to longevity.

"It's a hard thing," she said. "I think just being (healthy). Take care of your body."

Those who know Jaksich the best also recognize her positive attitude. One of her close friends told this paper that Jaksich just "loves life and everything is fun and happy."

Jaksich, who was born as the youngest child of Albert and Bessie Lueth on Feb. 1, 1919, grew up on a ranch in Sutter County.

As a teenager, she earned 33 1/3 cents per hour working at roadside orange juice stand operator in Roseville. She later came to Sacramento, where she was hired to work at the Capital National Bank.

She was married to Jerry Jaksich in 1942 and has two children: John Jaksich and Barbara Mikacich.

Mikacich recognized the importance of celebrating the lives of centenarians.

"It really is an honor, it really is," she said. "I don't know how many of us are going to reach 100."

Another centenarian, Land Park resident Tomako Mori, was born in Loomis and partially raised on a 100-acre fruit farm in Lincoln. She was one of seven children.

On that farm, the family handpicked fruit and hauled it via horse-drawn buggies.

Mori's father was born in Hiroshima, and would return to his native country on occasions to assist with the care of his family's property.

Mori lived in Japan during her junior high and high school years, and during that time, she learned how to arrange flowers.

With her dual citizenship, Mori also worked for the U.S. federal government as an interpreter.

Because she was still living in Japan during World War II, Mori was not placed in a wartime Japanese internment camp.

"I was in Japan," she said. "I had a rough time in Japan, because I was born (in the United States). I couldn't do anything. They had eyes on me. They thought I was a spy. I don't know anything about (being a spy)."

Mori recalled nearly being killed by a piece of a warplane that fell from the sky during World War II.

"Airplanes were shot up in the air and fell into pieces, and all of the pieces started to fall on the ground," she said. "(One piece) almost hit me. It was that close, coming from the sky. (Someone said), 'Look out, look out, look out.' And good thing I didn't move, because (it) was coming right after me. That was in Osaka in 1942."

Another approach to survival was Mori and her family's decision to not hide away in bombing shelters. She mentioned that the shelters were the first places that were bombed during raids.

Mori added that following the war, she returned to the United States with her father, her mother and two of her brothers.

"They wouldn't let you (return to the United States during wartime)," she said.

Fast forwarding in her life, she has grown to have a large family, and a very fulfilling life.

"I feel so great," Mori said. "I can't (believe) I'm 100 years old."

While sitting next to her father, Nai Chin "Nelson" Koo, Teacy Koo described what it is like to have a father who has lived for 100 years.

"It's a journey for sure," she said. "Now he lives with me. It's quite a job to take care of an old dad, but I love him."

Nelson, who was born in the Zhejiang province of China was the son of a medical doctor.

He studied agriculture in college and eventually became an expert in tea production.

During the 1970s, he was sent to Bolivia by the United Nations and the Taiwan government to work on the development of tea plantations and other crops.

He came to the United States following his retirement, and he currently lives in Orangevale.

Nelson shared his secret to longevity.

"I eat, sleep, rest, work hard, and help others," he said. "I'm happy every day, all the time."

Ted Fong, director of development for ACC Senior Services, said that he discovered that all of the honored centenarians are generally happy about their lives.

"Even though, learning from their children, many of them had very difficult lives and difficult family situations, when they look back, it was all worth it," he said. "It's amazing."

Fong placed great emphasis on the support that these centenarians receive from their families.

"I think the strong family support is a big deal, and you saw that by the turnout of the families (at the event)," he said. "There's a big correlation between family support, socialization, getting seniors out of isolation that really contributes to them living longer, lasting longer, living happier."



Fong noted that it is ACC Senior Service's intention to not only hold this event on an annual basis, but to also increase its size every year. And he added that it should become easier to find more centenarians in Sacramento County as the years go by.

"There are 75,000 centenarians in the U.S.," he said. "That number will grow to 600,000 by mid-century. At this rate, 40% of the residents at ACC Care Center will be centenarians. One can only imagine how big the celebration will be at the 66th annual care center fundraiser in 2050."

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