

VIEWPOINT

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March 2021

New COVID-19 cases down more than half in area in last 30 days

Health officials urge caution, say infection rate still elevated

By Mike Scheible

The number of new COVID-19 infections in the area that includes most of Curtis Park has declined by more than half over the last month, according to the latest Sacramento County data.

The Curtis Park area had logged a total of 788 COVID-19 cases as of Feb. 22. Of the total, 66 had occurred in the previous 30 days, down from 138 in the 30 days prior to Jan. 25.

However, health officials caution that infections locally and throughout Sacramento remain at elevated levels, so we all need to continue to take precautions to protect ourselves and others. Given that there are likely two to three additional infections for every confirmed case, we can expect that there are currently between 10 to 20 active infections among the 5,500 people who reside in Curtis Park.

Local cases peaked in December, when about 45 infections per week occurred among the 22,000 residents of the Curtis Park, Land Park, Newton Booth and Poverty Ridge neighborhoods in the 95818 ZIP code. Weekly infections averaged about 28 during January, and dropped further to about 18 per week in February, reaching a low of 14 cases during the most recent week reported on Feb. 22.

Local infection rates are still below those in most
Please see COVID, Page 2



Bret Harte's Principal James Tucker says that he has been helping with testing and small-group instruction. He adds, "I think the most challenging thing is not seeing the kids every day."

Photo/Joan Cusick

Lonely at the top

Principal says he misses kids during virtual learning

By Lauren Gothard
and Lindsey Sin

Over the past year, we've learned about the experiences of students, parents and teachers as they navigate remote learning and attempt to strike the precarious balance between family life and work, all under one roof.

For James Tucker, many of his responsibilities as principal of Bret Harte Elementary School haven't been all that different during the pandemic from in-

person learning. But he misses seeing the students.

"I think the most challenging thing is not seeing the kids every day," Tucker says. "I got into education to be around students all the time, and because I'm not in the role of teacher, that is the most challenging part for me. I go in and help with testing and small-group instruction, just so I can spend time with the kids."

Day to day, Tucker spends his time ensuring that teachers, students and families have what

Please see Principal, Page 5

Nurse must juggle roles in pandemic

By Patti Roberts

There are many unsung heroes in these COVID-19 times, especially frontline healthcare workers. In Curtis Park, we have doctors, nurses, speech and physical therapists, pharmacists and other medical providers who put in long, stress-filled shifts while also trying to juggle work-life balance.

Lydia Marque, a registered nurse in the neurology and stroke department of a local medical center, has

been dealing with COVID patients since February 2020, working three shifts a week, often with additional overtime hours.

Lydia lives on Portola Way with her husband, Allen, and their children, Devin, 4, and Dylan, 2. Allen owns Creative Web Systems, a web design, development and marketing company.

"I work in a neurology/stroke unit which has a unique relationship with COVID patients," Lydia says. "We don't see as many COVID patients as other

units, but COVID doesn't discriminate."

Lydia says one of the biggest challenges for medical workers is witnessing so much fear and suffering in patients and in their families.

"Because of the need to keep patients, staff and visitors safe, there is a limited visiting policy," she says. "For most people, being hospitalized is scary and likely one of the worst times of their lives. And then to have to adapt without their family and support members adds a new layer."

The staff helps patients and families connect

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Oak Park's Michael Blair seeks to benefit all
Community leader shares issues, housing, changes on Broadway.
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La Famiglia offers Italian dinner March 12
Dinner to-go will benefit longtime Sierra 2 tenants.
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Local warblers with bright yellow patches
Feeding on insects, this bird catches food in flight.
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Executive Director's Report

Trying times for Sierra 2 have included rays of hope

By Terri Shettle

Concerns about a virus that seemed to be spreading rapidly with serious effects in older populations forced the Senior Center at the Sierra 2 Center to shut down on March 13, 2020. Five days later, a statewide lockdown closed all of Sierra 2. Events were canceled.

The lockdown was expected to be two weeks in duration. A year later, we are adjusting, adapting and surviving. We're also hoping, planning and positioning for a new normal.

The cancellation of rentals, events and classes in the closure's early months forced a rash of refunds and depletion of Sierra 2's cash reserve. Staffing levels were reduced. Business operating expenses were reduced, deferred or eliminated. Nonessential services and maintenance were put on hold to stabilize the net losses. Classes moved to virtual offerings.

**TERRI
SHETTLE**

**Sierra 2
Executive
Director**



From a staff of 14, seven of them full time, the new normal is down to seven employees and one on-call, who all work less than 20 hours per week.

Through the trials and tribulations of trying to stop the financial bleeding, there have been rays of hope, generosity and government lifelines. SCNA benefitted from a \$12,000 forgivable loan from the city at the beginning of the closure. In May, we received \$80,000 from the Paycheck Protection Program,

a forgivable loan that enabled us to bring back most of the staff for two months while also assisting with utilities and other COVID-related expenses. While this was short lived, it provided an important infusion of activity and an opportunity to care for employees who have given so much over the years and who suffered during this trying time.

Another \$44,000 grant from the city through the CARES funding program soon followed, helping us with basic business continuity. In February, with great relief, we received a second draw from the Paycheck Protection Program for \$106,000.

With SCNA's support and leadership, generous community donors contributed more than \$53,000 during the Big Day of Giving in May and \$18,000 to the Porch Picnic fundraiser in October. These unrestricted funds are key to the financial survival of SCNA.

Even with these funding sources, the costs of continuing minimal operations, administration and managing the property have required use of \$50,000 from SCNA's Reserve for Replacement Fund, which is normally set aside for major facility repairs and replacements.

Dipping into this fund hinders our long-term ability to properly care for the property. We know that planned repairs and replacement costs for the facility over the next five years will range between \$400,000 and \$500,000. In normal years, with income exceeding expenses, we could manage such an expense. Not knowing when normal operations will resume, this situation is tenuous.

We are applying for grants that become available from a wide variety of grant makers wherever we qualify.

Our singular focus is to survive for as long as we need to until we can turn survival into rebuilding and thriving.

Nurse: Learning to carve out time for self-care is a valuable lesson

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through iPads and video calls. "These are my favorite, and heart-tugging, moments when I see my patients connect with their families," she says. "Seeing them try their hardest to show their children or spouse a thumbs up with a hand that's been flaccid for weeks is such a miracle to witness." She feels the stress of working long hours and extra shifts due to unpredicted surges in patient levels.

"The need for healthcare workers exceeds the supply at times, and we have had to work with what we have. Most of my colleagues and I have worked extra hours or double shifts to try to help fill gaps."

Lydia tries to find a work-life balance with the demands of motherhood and family life competing with her job.

"I love what I do and feel a lot of reward in my career," she says. "But I also have two little guys and an amazing husband who I miss all the time. I want to cherish these sweet, and sometimes challenging, moments at home. The most valuable lesson I've learned during this pandemic is to carve out some

time for self-care, which I found is essential in being able to give back to both my family and my job."

She wishes the general population would understand the immense physical and psychological stress healthcare workers are under on a daily basis.

"I think there's going to be an element of mental trauma after this is over for healthcare workers as well as society in the whole," she says. "There are days I go into work and I feel like I'm at war. In many ways, we as a society, are at war with COVID-19."

She is a witness to the consequences of some unfortunate personal decisions.

"What I find challenging is when things, such as mask wearing, elevates politics over science and public health," she says. "I respect people's choice and right not to get vaccinated. But I find it challenging when the source of some statements fueling those concerns are not based in science. We all choose to live in a society where we need each other. The challenge with the virus is that there are so many variables, so much is unknown, and so much that we are still learning."



Photo/Joan Cusick

Lydia's younger son Dylan, 2, listens to Mom's heartbeat.

COVID: 95818 would rank in most restrictive Purple tier

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adjacent areas, but those areas have improved at a faster pace than in the 95818 ZIP code area.

While progress has been significant, case rates are still high. If the 95818 ZIP code area were a county, it would remain in the Purple tier, California's most

restrictive zone where transmission is widespread.

To progress from Purple to the next tier (Red - Substantial Transmission), our daily average new cases per 100,000 would need to drop from the February rate of 12 to below 7. Sacramento County's average daily infection rate for

the same time period was about 18.

Progress is being made on vaccinating everyone, but slowly. Through Feb. 18, an estimated 124,000 residents of Sacramento County (8%) had received at least one dose, 48,000 of whom had received both doses. An average of 6,500 vaccine doses are being administered daily. Unfortunately, at this rate it will take months before a majority of the vulnerable population will be protected.

COVID-19 is the name of the

disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The highly infectious virus has rampaged throughout the United States since approximately mid-January 2020, researchers believe. California's stay-at-home order took hold approximately March 15, 2020.

The virus predominantly affects the respiratory system, which means individuals with pre-existing conditions involving the respiratory system are at greatest risk once infected.

Racial Justice Committee reaches out to Oak Park

By Kathy Les

Oak Park community leader Michael Blair met with SCNA's Ad Hoc Racial Justice Committee over Zoom recently to share information about neighborhood issues as a prelude to Oak Park board members attending SCNA's board meeting in March.

Blair has the distinction of sitting on both the Oak Park Neighborhood Association (OPNA) and the South Oak Park Community Association (SOPCA) boards.

Blair runs the nonprofit Neighborhood Innovation Project. He is originally from Anchorage, Alaska, which he left to study at Sacramento State University. In a class on Black history, his professor mentioned living in Oak Park because he wished to make change.

Blair fixed on that idea. He bought his first home in Oak Park 17 years ago, and started making the best change he could on behalf of his adopted neighborhood.

Oak Park's 27,000 residents live within an area bordered by U.S. Highway 50, Stockton Boulevard, Fruitridge Road and Highway 99. The area includes two active neighborhood associations – OPNA, which was established more than 20 years ago; and SOPCA, more recently organized to better target the needs of those south of 12th and 14th avenues.

Blair points to the biggest changes along Broadway, where new retail and restaurants serving people from inside and outside Oak Park have driven up housing and land prices.

Not surprisingly, some in Oak Park want the neighborhood to remain as it is with its collection of older, relatively affordable homes. Others have a desire to see major building improvements.

"It makes it difficult to accommodate everybody," said Blair.

With land still cheaper in Oak Park than in some areas of the city, Blair cites a tendency by the city to concentrate homeless housing and services there. "We're trying to fight through that," he said.

The most recent population data from the U.S. Census shows the Oak Park population at 36% Latino, 26% white, 18% Black, 14% Asian and 7% other.

While ethnically diverse, Oak Park struggles with poverty. The median income is \$34,000, compared with \$55,000 citywide. Just 39% in Oak Park are homeowners, compared with 55% citywide.

OPNA has monitored the plans for Aggie Square, a multi-billion-dollar proposal by UC Davis to create a new research and business center bordering Oak Park on the east. OPNA questions whether the promised 5,000 jobs will be suited to local residents or mainly to professionals coming into the area and driving up the cost of housing, and whether housing necessary for a new cadre of workers will cause displacement of existing residents no longer able to afford higher rents or housing prices.

Along with other groups and Councilmember Jay Schenirer, OPNA has weighed in heavily for a legally binding agreement to ensure Oak Park benefits from the Aggie Square project from inception into the future.

Such an agreement would help steer the development to the betterment of Oak Park. Specifically, the agreement being worked out seeks job training and employment opportunities for low-skilled workers; housing offering a pathway to ownership for existing residents; community facilities, including a community center, after-school programs for kids and an art center; and, transportation controls to alleviate parking and traffic issues resulting from an influx of new workers.

While Blair sees a need for low-income housing,



Photo/Kathy Les

Michael Blair chose to live in Oak Park to help make change and improve his neighborhood.

he doesn't want Oak Park to become the poor capital of Sacramento. "Instead, let's find ways to help residents make more [income] so they can afford more," said Blair. "I want to build everyone up."

For more information on the Oak Park Neighborhood Association and to subscribe to its newsletter, visit www.oakparkna.com. For the South Park Neighborhood Association, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/southoakpark/>.

Pipe system functional in Crocker Village basin

By Andrea Rosen

Construction of the Crocker Village detention basin, which is required by state law and conditions of approval, is expected to be completed by June, except for fencing and landscaping, which is to be completed in the fall.

Viewpoint has learned that the main pipe system that has been installed is functional. If a high-water event occurs, this should help the neighborhood avoid street flooding.

Once the basin is completed, the city's Department of Utilities will oversee the function and maintenance of the inlets and outlets.

Viewpoint wants your story ideas

Viewpoint appreciates neighbors who submit news about their babies, new neighbors, milestones and special events. This includes letters to the editor and opinions.

Please send your ideas to denniscusick52@gmail.com with Viewpoint in the subject field.

Deadline for Viewpoint copy is the 15th of the month prior to publication.

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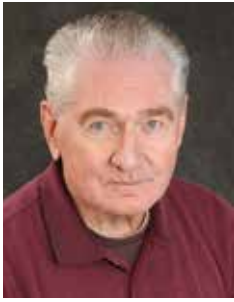
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**BILL
HOOVER**

**SCNA Board
President**



By Bill Hoover

The saying “March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb” may actually have some validity this year.

Despite a chaotic beginning, effective COVID-19 vaccines are becoming more widely available, and a semblance of organization and structure in the vaccination program is emerging. There are still a lot of hiccups, but it appears the corner may have been turned and we will begin to see vaccinations in increasing numbers in all segments of our society.

One can hope and rightly expect that by the end of March, the majority of our citizens will receive at least the first of their two shots.

What does this have to do with SCNA and the Sierra 2 Center? Well, just about everything since the sooner the populace has been inoculated, the sooner we can begin the gradual return to some sense of normalcy.

I am not naive enough to think that Sierra 2 will immediately be able to open its doors or that SCNA will start hosting outdoor events. But the increase in vaccinations means we can begin planning for these events. The ability to plan for the future will be a major step in the right direction.

President's message

Increase in vaccinations gives SCNA reason for optimism

Though there is much to look forward to, we still have to address immediate concerns. The recent storm, which was highlighted in last month's *Viewpoint*, caused significant roof damage to Sierra 2. While additional estimates are expected, the current cost for roof repair is likely to be \$100,000, which will represent a major hit to our Reserve for Replacement Fund. This is especially true after emergency withdrawals last month to cover operational expenses. Additionally, since our board meeting some water damage and a new gas leak have been discovered. The cost for those repairs has yet to be determined. We have contacted the city to see if it can provide assistance with the repairs.

There is some good news, though. Sierra 2 was approved for approximately \$100,000 in the second round of Payroll Protection Program moneys. These funds are primarily to cover salaries, but a percentage can be applied to utility expenses. The biggest benefit of these loans is that they are forgivable.

Unfortunately, those funds and other grants we have applied for cannot be used to replenish the Reserve for Replacement Fund. We will still have to rely on a successful Big Day of Giving in May to cover that and other expenses.

Although barely visible, there is definitely a light at the end of this very long tunnel.

Notes from Feb. 3 SCNA board meeting

SCNA faces \$100,000 roof repair costs

The likely cost for the Sierra 2 Center's roof repair is approximately \$100,000, Executive Director **Terri Shettle** reported. This is a huge sum given the past year of plunging revenue due to loss of tenants and room rentals. The money will come out of SCNA's Reserve for Replacement Fund that is held for the required maintenance of the building.

When the current lease with the city expires in 2024, SCNA will look at the issue of repairs in the building's maintenance, a burden now solely on SCNA.

Eric Fay, chair of the Neighborhood Concerns Committee (NCC), listed the top priorities for this year: (1) General Plan 2040 with R-1 rezoning as the focus; (2) reaching out to other neighborhood associations; (3) the creation of a land use subcommittee; (4) the Crocker Village gas station; and (5) the homeless shelter on X Street.

Bruce Pierini, chair of the *Viewpoint* committee, noted a productive discussion with **Dennis Cusick**, *Viewpoint's* editor, regarding

The next meeting of the SCNA board will be from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. March 3 via Zoom.

If you're interested in attending and to receive the link, please contact president@sierra2.org.

regular collaboration between the SCNA board and *Viewpoint* editors.

Terri Shettle summarized the Executive Committee's several weeks of planning for the board retreat sessions in February and March. Session 1 was to welcome a consultant for nonprofit organizations and governance. Session 2 was to delve into the financial status of the organization in pre-COVID-19 and present times. Session 3 on March 1 will be devoted to the board committees and how they will address their goals in the coming year.

— *Bruce Pierini, board secretary*

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Persistence pays off in hunt for COVID vaccine

By Judy Green Scheible

Chaos laced with a bit of panic and thinning patience could describe our searches for a COVID-19 vaccine. Everyone is looking, signing up on official directions and following tips from friends. Most often the latter work.

With determination and tenacity, Judy Brush of Third Avenue waded into the shifting puzzle of vaccine sources and helped at least nine people score their first shot. She got hers thanks to a serendipitous move by her husband, John, who interrupted grocery shopping to sign up on a stand-by list at the Safeway pharmacy in Crocker Village. It also helped that during the big January storm people didn't show up for their appointments. The Brushes got a call that afternoon and received their first shots with the pharmacy's extra doses.

Lucking into those extra doses has worked for a number of neighbors.

Besides luck, Judy Brush found success for others after hours of searching the Internet. Few places are taking calls.

"Tell everyone you know you're looking for a vaccine," Judy said. "I got on every list I could find." Judy's persistence developed into an old-fashioned phone tree. She found vaccine availability at a pharmacy school in Elk Grove, at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Vacaville, at a clinic set up at Sacramento State University and at Jesuit High School.

The Elk Grove source came from a tip called in by a retired doctor friend. That resulted in Judy's next-door neighbor getting the vaccine. Another friend called



Nurse Lydia Marque gets her vaccination at her workplace.

about the clinic at Sacramento State, which, at that time, had enough appointments for several friends.

"Everyone's talking about it (the vaccine)," Judy said. "If you're under 65, forget it, unless you're a teacher or medical worker."

Jesuit had a vaccine site for teachers, but another neighbor age 66 and a retired civil servant managed to get the vaccine at Jesuit. Judy said each site had its

own standards for age limits.

Other people willing to gamble had success by waiting at a site for surplus vaccine at the end of the day. Age may be a factor, but then to not waste vaccine, age may not be a factor. It's a gamble.

Surplus vaccine worked for Robin and Bill French of Curtis Way. They hit brick walls in trying to get appointments.

"We went to three places in one day and tried a fourth online but didn't get it," Robin said.

Then they gambled on surplus at a hospital site. Bill got his on the day of their appearance. Robin, 75, was given an appointment for the next morning because of a cancellation and her age.

Robin's neighbor, Marcia Scott, 67, a retired ICU nurse, following a friend's tip, got an appointment at Pucci Pharmacy on J Street. Before that, she had spent 90 minutes on hold with Kaiser and then got cut off. "I had different links from neighbors and pickleball friends," Marcia said.

The Pucci Pharmacy had no appointments at press time, but it did accept sign-ups for its standby list. For people without a computer, its website recommended finding a friend to help. Pucci was not taking vaccine calls.

Another determined neighbor, Barbara Sherry of Third Avenue, searched six days to get a vaccine for her 91-year-old mother, who lives on her own in East Sacramento. Barbara was online every day at 8 a.m. She was directed by Sutter Health to Antioch, Placerville and Suisun before she finally found the vaccine in Davis.

All of these neighbors recommend persisting and getting on every list you find.

Principal: Tucker provides variety of training and support

Continued from Page 1

they need for success during remote learning. That includes providing virtual instructional leadership, training and virtual planning sessions with staff and teachers.

For Bret Harte students and families, he helps with a wide range of issues, such as Internet access, support for the students' social and emotional needs, and support for a successful learning environment at home. He regularly pops into the Zoom classrooms to observe firsthand how instruction is going. He also delivers school materials to students' homes when necessary.

"I feel like the managerial aspect of running a school hasn't changed much, but my focus has been on making sure my teachers, my students and families have the tools and knowledge to do this successfully," Tucker said.

Add to this list the duties of school principal that would normally happen in the physical space: participating in School Site Council, writing the school

plan, and being an active member of the PTA.

When Bret Harte students and teachers moved online for distance learning last March, most assumed it would be for a few weeks. As weeks turned into months, the stress of continuous remote learning and its effects on students and families became a concern.

But Tucker is quick to identify some positive aspects. Teachers, administrators, students and families have shown incredible resilience in a year that was fraught and scary at times. Being able to connect digitally has allowed families to engage in school events and meetings that they would otherwise miss.

"The fact that families get to see what the kids are doing day in and day out is a bright spot," Tucker said.

He recognizes that parents are intimately involved in the learning process now.

"Parents know what is going on in classrooms because they're monitoring



Photo/Joan Cusick

A sign on Bret Harte's office door suggests calling the principal for help.

their students, and that makes parents an integral part of their education, even more so than before."

Without question, this last year has created numerous challenges for our Bret Harte families and students. But the commitment and dedication of the school's staff and teachers, starting with Principal Tucker, has never faltered.

If you have questions about open

enrollment at Bret Harte Elementary for the 2021-22 school year, contact the office at 916 395-5190. To schedule a virtual tour, contact Principal Tucker at 916 914-9988.

The Bret Harte PTA will meet virtually at 6 p.m. on Monday, March 8. The PTA will also host a virtual iReady instruction for currently enrolled families at 6 p.m. on Thursday, March 18.

Faria Bakery meets gourmand's craving for artisanal delights

By Bruce Pierini

In our household, bread is sacred. We make it ourselves and seek out great artisanal breads and pastries. Over the last six months, we have struck gold just five minutes from home.

Faria Bakery, at 3417 Broadway, has been open for more than a year, after first offering its bounty of delicious artisanal loaves at area farmers markets.

Faria features 10 or so savory breads, among them the flagship rustic country loaf, the unusual Miso bread and the sandwich favorite pan de miel with light honey.

Pastry delights include buttery but crispy croissants, pain au chocolate, buckwheat coffecake and morning buns. There is even one called Kouign-Amann, a specialty of the Brittany region of France with a sweet and salty croissant dough and caramelized shell. All are made on site daily, many with natural yeast.

Faria has a Wednesday pizza night, sometimes making 100 pies, and has offered bread-making classes on the front sidewalk.

The owner and primary baker is Christopher Beattie, an LA transplant to Sacramento via the Bay Area. The name Faria was inspired by his favorite childhood beach in Ventura County.



Photo/Judy Harper

Owner Christopher Beattie takes out loaves from his imported Italian oven.

Beattie says he was stuck at a computer screen doing GIS mapping for too many years, while being an avid home baker, gifting appreciative friends. The yearning became a passion as he began taking classes at the San Francisco Baking Institute. There he had a revelation for what it would take to do commercial baking. "I can really do that!" he realized. He had the knowledge; now he would need ovens and other equipment and huge sacks of flour. He credits

teachers and friends: "They helped me find my way into becoming a professional baker."

Beattie and his wife are among those Bay Area escapees from congestion and high real estate prices. "Sacramento was a unique balance between a large city and a small town," he pointed out. "When my wife and I moved here to Oak Park, we looked around the area and saw no artisanal bakeries. I then began selling loaves at the Oak Park Farmers' Market in 2018 and it grew from there. People loved the product so I began looking for a space."

Prime among his needs was a commercial space with room for large loaves to ferment and proof, some weighing almost three pounds. He also needed huge ovens equipped with stone decks to maintain the high temperatures required for artisanal breads, so he imported such a behemoth from Italy. Why Italy? "It has a very long tradition of bread baking and manufacture of ovens."

The breads are not only delicious but nutritious. "Twenty percent whole wheat is the lowest ratio in our breads, some are 40-50% and some up to 100%. There is a depth of flavor and color, and the fermentation makes the loaves pro-biotic, which are easier to digest."

Eleven full-time and several part-time employees begin shifts as early as 4 a.m. There is limited space but "everyone has fun" making the dough, proofing, shaping loaves and keeping the shelves stocked and the product going out the door. Leftover loaves have been contributed to the Sacramento Food Bank and Wellspring Women's Center.

For more information and hours, call 916 204-8726 or visit fariabakery.com.

The Bloom Room gives preview of its business plan

By Kelsey Wehels

The Bloom Room, which is scheduled to open in late spring at 24th Street and 10th Avenue, offered a taste of what's coming with a "Sweetheart Market" pop-up on Valentine's Day featuring an assortment of sweets, gifts and plenty of flowers.

While the florist and retail space is not yet open regularly, owner Alley Pappenberger wanted to use Valentine's Day to introduce her business to the neighborhood and promote other local businesses.

"The vendors are all friends, or friends of friends,

so the event was promoted primarily through their Instagram pages and word of mouth," Alley said.

Among the vendors were Desserts by Jackie Robinson, the former pastry chef at Bacon & Butter who started her business after being laid off due to COVID-19; Delicious Delights by The Dancer's Pastry, owned by Chelsea Farrah, who also started her business after the pandemic hit, offering traditional and vegan grazing boxes and cheese bouquets; Align Botanics, owned by Alicia Kortas, selling nontoxic soy candles; and Mimi's Macramés, owned by Naomi Diaz, selling home decor and hand-crafted macramé jewelry. The Old Pour Soul Mobile Bar offered strawberry lemonade mule mocktails.

Alley says The Bloom Room will include a retail shop, with floral arrangements sourced from the San Francisco Flower Market and Flora Fresh in Sacramento, and a workshop space available for rent.



Photo/Joan Cusick

Owner Alley Pappenberger presented a pop-up of local crafters to introduce her business.

You can follow The Bloom Room on Instagram (@bloomroomevents) and on the Internet at bloomroomevents.com.

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Bleu is a boulevard boutique with flavor of Paris' Left Bank

By Erik Fay

Shopping in Left Bank boutiques or the famous Paris flea market is a “to do” for many people’s European travels, with family-owned shops filled with thoughtfully displayed decorative household and garden items. Now, Curtis Park residents can get a taste of Parisian shopping at Bleu on Franklin Boulevard at Fifth Avenue.

Bleu relocated from Folsom Boulevard in April 2020, closer to home for owners Marsha McGill and Laurie Newman, who live in Oak Park and Curtis Park, respectively. Marsha was a high school teacher in the Sacramento City Unified School District for more than 25 years. Laurie has worked in small business and retail for more than 30 years. They had long thought a European-style shop might be a good fit for the neighborhood.

Marsha and Laurie have invested a lot of hard work into the shop. The decorative exterior signage, window dressings, potted plants and pale blue accents create a pleasing visual. They have helped dress up this block of Franklin Boulevard.

The shop offers a large collection of new and vintage jewelry, bags, purses, clothing, figurines, paintings and glassware. There’s also an array of gift items including candles and soaps.

The thoughtfully curated mélange of texture, color, art and function within the shop is just half the treat. A stroll to the back takes you outdoors to a bright and terraced rear garden displaying pots, plant stands and racks, bird houses, metal tables and chairs.

Bleu’s inventory comes from a variety of sources; sometimes they buy things directly from people who approach them.

Laurie and Marsha said neighboring businesses have made them feel welcome. Their plans for the near future include a “sidewalk flea market” a couple of times a year.

Bleu is open Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 3009 Franklin Blvd. Shop hours will increase when the COVID-19 pandemic decreases. Customers can make appointments to visit the shop during the week by contacting the owners at 916 217-1103. View, contact and get shop updates via Instagram at [Bleusacramento](#) and Facebook at [Bleu](#).



Photo/Erik Fay

At her shop on Franklin Boulevard, co-owner Laurie Newman says neighboring businesses have welcomed them.

Friday Dinner To Go March 12 to benefit La Famiglia Catering

By Terri Shettle

Sierra 2 Center is organizing a Friday Night Dinner To Go on March 12 in support of La Famiglia Catering, a tenant that has been hit especially hard by restrictions on public gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

La Famiglia caterers Jeff Roberts and Leo Forget have operated their business out of the Garden Room kitchen for nearly 25 years. They have been generous with their support of SCNA



Photo/Leo Forget

La Famiglia Catering will offer an Italian dinner kit for two at \$35 at the Friday Dinner To Go event.

by participating in the annual Wine Tasting & Silent Auction, supplying Sierra 2 staff with yummy treats and snacks throughout the year, and

donating meal services to board retreats and staff gatherings.

Sierra 2 hopes to return the caterers’ generosity by helping to keep their business going.

The minimum order is an Italian dinner kit for two for \$35. La Famiglia’s dinner features a Chicken Parmesan dinner, including a choice of lasagna Bolognese with meat or vegetarian lasagna Alfredo, Caesar salad, breadsticks and cannoli. Additional meal kits are \$17.50 per person.

To place an order, call Leo Forget at 916 470-5849. All orders must be pre-paid by credit card by March 8. All major credit cards will be accepted.

Pickup will be from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Friday, March 12, in the parking lot behind Sierra 2 Center, 2791 24th St. Enter the parking lot from Fourth Avenue.

All Italian dinner kits will be individually boxed and prepared using COVID guidelines.

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Construction of W/X homeless shelter underway

By Andrea Rosen

After numerous delays and multiple revised start dates, construction of the W/X homeless shelter is underway with a target completion date of summer 2021.

The city approved construction of the shelter in November 2020 as part of its ongoing plan to handle the homeless crisis, but the Trump administration delayed completion of the lease between the city and Caltrans, which owns the land. Within a week of the inauguration of President Biden, Caltrans had approval to complete the lease of its land for the city's use.

The shelter is modeled after the one that opened last year in Meadowview.

The W/X shelter will have two prefabricated semi-permanent buildings with aluminum interior arches and all-weather tension fabric stretched over the exterior. The shelter can house up to 100 individuals temporarily, depending on the need for spacing due to COVID-19. It will not only provide housing but



Photo/Dan Murphy

A homeless shelter building frame has been installed near the Broadway offramp of Highway 99.

also food, storage, laundry and showers, and will accommodate pets.

The site will include a 6,300-square-foot dormitory and a 4,500-square-foot dining/administration building. Additionally, two converted shipping containers will be used for other services.

The Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Authority will select and oversee the shelter's operator. A request for proposal will be issued in mid-March. The operator will be selected by mid-May.

The operator and the city will coordinate with programs assisting individuals with obtaining permanent housing and job readiness, as well as providing health and mental health services.

The city prefers that the operator work with community-based vendors when available for supplying food and other services needed to run the shelter.

Homeless individuals currently occupying adjacent sidewalks will have priority for this housing.

Violence has no place in protest of mayor's decisions

I have lived in Curtis Park more than 30 years. It's a wonderful neighborhood. I would consider it one of the most politically active communities in the city of Sacramento. In my time, I have witnessed and lived through the park street closures, the relocation of the "tot lot" and, of course, Crocker Village, among other disputes.

Each of these issues caused Curtis Park residents to loudly voice their concerns, organize their friends and neighbors and work toward a result that may have not been universally desired. In the end, however, disputes were settled peacefully and life moved on.

A few weeks ago, demonstrators went to the home of our mayor to

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voice their displeasure with his actions on the homelessness issue. This despite his leadership on the issue since his election. It was not the first time a protest was targeted at his home. Past protests were peaceful and raised important issues that must be addressed if we are going to solve the problems we face.

However, as was widely reported, the protest became violent with

significant property damage to his home. Artwork was destroyed, landscaping was torn out, lights and security cameras were smashed, and rocks were thrown at the garage and house. The protesters also called out to the mayor's children to "come out and play." The mayor was home with his wife; his children are grown and no longer live at home.

On the issue of homelessness, Sacramentans have a right to be frustrated. Despite the multitude of city efforts, including the construction of the W/X Broadway Navigation Center, the number of unhoused individuals in our community has continued to increase. Layered upon the pandemic, this is certainly one of the most challenging times we have faced.

If we are to be successful as a community and a city, elected, community and business leaders must come together to denounce violence as a means to an end. It is simply unacceptable. Sacramento can and should be a beacon for a nation that is struggling to find itself, moving forward to take care of those most in need, and meeting the challenges before us.

What happened to the mayor and his family is intolerable, but this is not just about him or the protest. This is about who we are as a community and a city. We must find ways to disagree and stand up for what's right, and work out our differences with civility and respect. It is only then that we can become a great city.

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Birds of Curtis Park

Yellow-rumped warbler usually seen in motion hunting for insects

By Dan Murphy

During the winter, the only warbler you are likely to see in the neighborhood is the yellow-rumped warbler.

The first thing that you notice about this bird is splotches of bright yellow. These splotches vary in intensity and scope with season, gender, and sub-species; however, there is always a characteristic bright yellow patch on the lower back that gives it the name yellow-rump, or more informally, “butter butt.”

The males can be somewhat drab in winter, but become far more colorful as the breeding season approaches.

The yellow-rump warbler used to be divided into two species – Audubon and

Myrtle. The Audubons predominate in the West and Myrtles in the East, though Myrtles are not rare here. As a result of evidence of hybridization, as well as genetic similarities, it is now classed as one species with two sub-species in the United States. The chief visual distinction is the Audubon has a yellow throat and the Myrtle a white throat with a dark face outlined in white.

For most of the summer, yellow-rump warblers disappear locally. This is because they are specialized to a conifer breeding habitat and migrate north and to the mountains for this critical period.

As the thin pointy beak indicates, the yellow-rump warbler feeds mostly on insects. It catches them in flight or by foliage-gleaning. It is usually seen in



Photos/Dan Murphy

Upper right, the yellow throat is an Audubon subspecies and the other two with white throats are Myrtle subspecies.

motion, hunting, with brief pauses. In winter it eats more berries, including waxy fruit that other warblers cannot digest, which allows it to winter as far north as Nova Scotia.

A yellow-rump is 5.5 inches tail tip

to beak tip and weighs about 12 grams. Local bluebirds and sparrows are an inch or an inch and a half longer, but are twice as heavy or more.

The lifespan of a yellow-rump warbler is seven years.

Homeowner spends thousands in battle with city over fence

By Dan Murphy

Last summer, city planning staff notified a Curtis Park homeowner that her recently constructed fence was in violation of ordinances regulating fence height and setback. The homeowner, who asked not to be identified, decided to contest the determination.

She had to file a request for a hearing before the city design director to permit a deviation from the ordinance's requirements. The filing fee was \$3,743.04.

The city's basic fence ordinance limits fence heights within a zone set back from the property line. The setback zone for a single-family home with a side yard facing a street is 12.5 feet. The setback zone between homes is 3 feet or 5 feet depending on lot size. Under the city fence and setback ordinances, fence height in the side yard setback zone is limited to 6 feet. In addition, a side-yard fence facing a street is limited to 4 feet, unless the fence is at least 5 feet from the property line.

The homeowner's new fencing is a solid wood fence 6 feet high with a 16-inch decorative wood lattice atop that. Both the street side and interior portions of the fence are on the property line.

The city staff's original position was that the fence



Photo/Joan Cusick

The owner didn't know her fence was over height.

between the houses violated the 6-foot height limit and that the fence facing the side street violated the 4-foot height limit.

The design director's hearing was held online Jan. 29. City staff conceded that the fence facing the side street only violated the 6-foot height limit after the homeowner submitted a neighbor's affidavit asserting that a fence had been at the property line since she bought her property in 1962.

The homeowner made these points:

- She didn't know the fence was over height until notified by the city, and had no intent to violate the law.

• She needed a higher fence for security and privacy. There had been several break-ins and the high floor level allowed people on the street to look into her kitchen.

• Many side-street fences in the immediate neighborhood are the same height as hers.

• Everyone complimented her on the fence, praising its handsomeness.

Fourteen neighbors sent letters to the city supporting the homeowner. Four letters opposed her fence, but only one of them was from a nearby resident.

The design director said he would grant a deviation for the height of the interior fence, as the public interest in limiting that fence to 6 feet was not strong. However, he said the public interest in limiting the fence height next to the sidewalk was stronger because the “public's right to walk down the street without a wall next to them” was impinged. He directed that the 16-inch lattice be removed.

The homeowner has appealed the decision. The filing fee for an appeal is \$4,000.

The Sacramento Planning and Design Commission will hear the appeal, likely at its March 25 meeting.

City ordinances regarding fences can be found online at: <http://www.qcode.us/codes/sacramento/>.



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Curtis Park Electric Stars seek to reduce carbon emissions

By Kathy Les

Think globally, act locally. This adage from the 1970s couldn't be more apt as scientists, governments and nonprofits point to the urgency of addressing climate change. To this end, a group of Curtis Park women calling themselves Electric Stars have banded together to focus on reducing carbon emissions through residential electrification right here in Curtis Park.

Residential electrification involves replacing gas appliances with those that are electric. Carbon emissions from California buildings represent 25% of the state's total greenhouse gas emissions, which California aims to reduce by 40% overall in the next decade.

Electricity is already our cleanest source of energy, especially with increased production through alternative sources. Converting to electric appliances, including water heaters, heating and cooling systems, clothes dryers and cook tops eliminates gas use in homes.

Unhitching our homes from gas will take some willingness to try new technologies. To this end, the six women with backgrounds in energy and climate change are working to have SMUD use Curtis Park as a pilot project. Their initial meeting with SMUD chief executive officer and

general manager Paul Lau indicates this is promising.

There's an advantage in Curtis Park where Rosanna Herber, a SMUD board of director, and Cheri Davis, SMUD residential electric expert, live. Both are involved in the Electric Stars along with Nancy McKeever of Cutter Way, formerly with the California Energy Commission, and Kathy Les of Portola Way and founder of the Curtis Park Energy Stars. Also assisting are Anne Stausboll, former chair with the Mayors' Climate Commission, and Elise Fandrich, a climate activist with 350 Sacramento.

"Switching from natural gas fuel to electricity to power home appliances will substantially cut carbon emissions, improve health and safety, and enhance comfort," said Nancy McKeever. "Many in Curtis Park are already getting on board, but let's up the pace."

Members of the group have converted all or parts of their homes to electric. Now they are hoping to help others learn more and follow their lead.

Mary Lou Flint of Cutter Way has taken the first steps toward electrification. "The SMUD rebate for our HVAC system was significant and saved us \$5,600 on the installation, which included a new whole house fan and better insulation," she said.

A study commissioned by SMUD in 2020 calculated that all-electric



Mary Lou Flint of Cutter Way points to the new condenser for her recently installed all-electric heat pump heating and cooling system. Outdoor units for heat pump electric systems have the capability to run in reverse and make hot air instead of only cool air.

Photo/Steve Meyer

homes would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 60%. That's because SMUD's 2020 electric power mix was about 50% carbon-free. The carbon reduction from residential electrification will increase over time as the grid reduces its dependency on carbon-based electrical generation.

SMUD offers attractive rebates to convert from gas to electric appliances. Up to a \$2,500 rebate per home is available to convert to heat pump water heaters, \$3,000 rebate per unit for heat pump HVAC units, and \$750 rebate for induction cooktops.

Homeowners will benefit from better indoor air quality, improved comfort (HVAC and water heating), faster and more responsive cooking (induction), and a cleaner environment. The rebates can make it attractive to convert, especially if you are in the

market to replace your water heater or HVAC system.

The Mayors' Commission on Climate Change, a joint effort of the cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento, set a goal for their cities to become carbon zero by 2045. Sacramento is moving toward this goal by considering an ordinance to require electrification of new buildings up to three stories starting in 2023 and buildings four stories and higher by 2026. While this is an important step, there are many more existing homes that when retrofitted with electric appliances will directly help achieve the carbon zero goal.

Contact Nancy McKeever at nancymckeever@comcast.net or Cheri Davis at Cheri.Davis@smud.org with questions or interest in being part of the residential electrification effort.

Crime in Curtis Park is down 7% from prior year

By Erik Fay

Reported crime in the neighborhood declined about 7% in 2020 from the previous year.

Curtis Park had one of the lowest rates of stolen vehicles among Sacramento neighborhoods, with 28 reported stolen in 2020, down from 41 in 2019.

Vandalism was the most frequently reported crime in 2020, with 47 reported incidents, up from 17 incidents in 2019. The majority of vandalism acts were graffiti and other property damage.

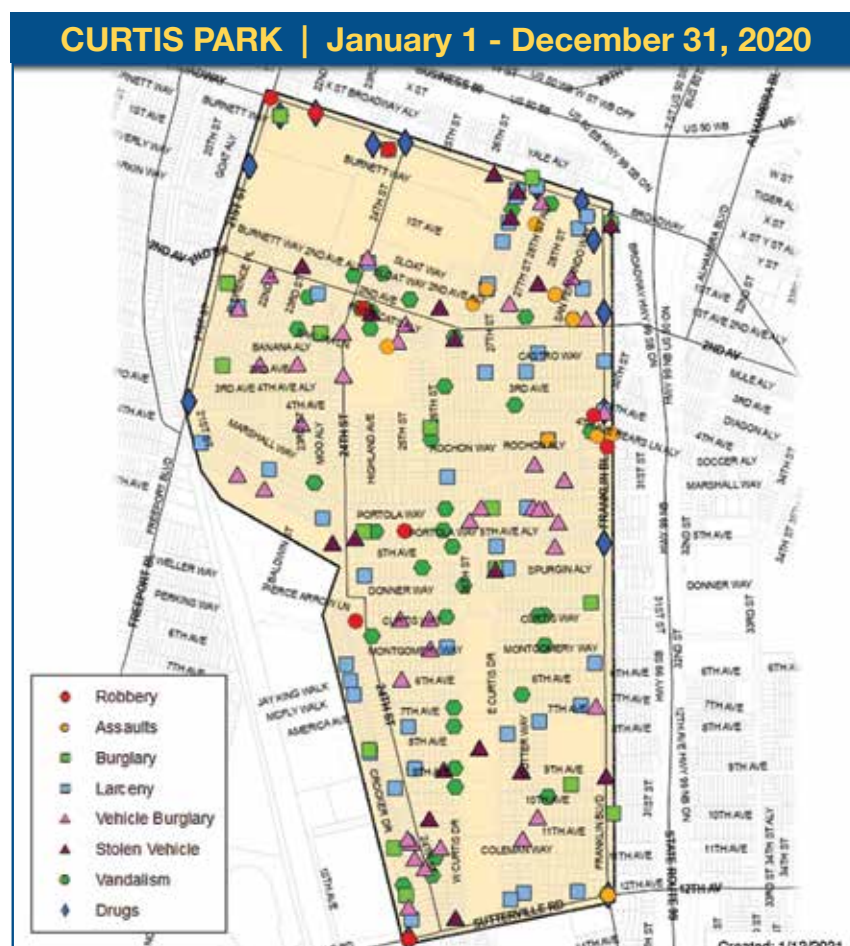
Larceny and vehicle burglary have historically been the most frequently reported neighborhood crimes. Larceny was notably reduced from 74 reported incidents in 2019 to 45 reported incidents in 2020. Vehicle burglary was nearly unchanged, with 41 reported incidents in 2020, up from 39 in 2019. These are

crimes of opportunity, typically involving porch thefts and thefts from inside or off of vehicles.

Curtis Park residents reported only 220 crimes total to Sacramento police in 2020, down from 236 in 2019. The reports in 2020 included nine robberies, 13 assaults, 21 burglaries and 16 drug crimes.

Reported crimes, other than vandalism, were generally located across the neighborhood with clusters in the Broadway area and the northeast quadrant of the neighborhood. Incidents of vandalism occurred along several blocks of West Curtis Drive. Few crimes were reported in the park itself in 2020.

The Sacramento Police Department encourages residents to report all crimes. Call 911 if you see a crime in progress. Call the non-emergency number, 916 808-5471, to report other criminal activity as soon as possible.



COMMUNITY CORNER

Remy and Alison DeWolf with their arms full of baby daughter, Margot, and 2-year-old big brother Dante.

Photo/Judy Harper



Arrival on 3rd Avenue

Alison and Remy DeWolf of Third Avenue welcomed baby Margot on Jan. 6.

At 9 pounds, 13 ounces, **Margot** joins brother **Dante**, age 2, and **Riley**, a 15-year-old Cockapoo. "He's doing pretty well with the transition," Alison said of Riley. "I've had him this whole time, and adding kids to his golden years has been a bit of a rude awakening, but he's done well overall."

The couple moved to Curtis Park from the Bay Area a little over three years ago. The move was easy as Alison's sister also moved to the area, just four blocks away. "We found our house, we

loved it and we've been really happy here ever since," Alison said.

The family share their home with an au pair from Germany, who has been with the family for a year and a half. "Because we're kind of a European-American household (Remy is French), we were particularly interested in doing something like that from the get-go," said Alison. "It's a much more intimate relationship where they're really part of your family."

Alison is a certified registered nurse anesthetist for Kaiser. Remy is a software engineer.

— Kelsey Wehls

Neighbors turn out to retrieve lost cat

We often hear about lost cats and dogs. Little **Ori's** story stands out for engaging the neighbors. An 18-month-old, black and white house cat, she slipped through an open door the evening before the big January storm.

No one noticed because she often hides in the house, according to **De Brewer** of Third Avenue. The next morning De's husband, **Stephen Bakken**, and their daughter **Berit** realized Ori was among the missing.

They did all the normal things: posters, phone calls to the animal shelter, messages on Next Door, LostMyKitty.com and Facebook. No luck.

The small herd of Third Avenue children searched diligently every day for 10 days. Desperation set in.

Then Berit took a suggestion from the Front Street Animal Shelter and rented a Have-a-Heart trap from Western Feed & Pet Supply. The family stocked it with food and some of Berit's T-shirts. They put the trap outside for the night and hoped Ori would find it before a skunk or raccoon did.

She did. She was skinny and scared



Photo/Judy Green Scheible

Berit of Third Avenue cuddles her cat, **Ori**, after its 10-day ordeal on the lam.

but safe, said De.

Ori, named for a video game character, came to the Brewer-Bakken house at 4 weeks old after she was discovered under a friend's truck.

De remarked how grateful she is for the neighborhood support. Among the businesses that put up her poster were Taylor's Market, Café Dantorels, Banfield Pet Hospital and Pet Supplies Plus.

— Judy Green Scheible

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End of an era: Casa Garden Restaurant closes

By Susan MacCulloch

Not many restaurants run by a nonprofit board and staffed with volunteers enjoy a 46-year run.

With just five paid employees and a volunteer crew of 200-plus, the restaurant and garden complex offered lunches, dinners for business associations and special events. Not to mention delicious, seasonal menus.

Since 1974, proceeds from Casa Garden raised about \$3.4 million for the Sacramento Children's Home across Sutterville Road from Curtis Park. But with the COVID-19 pandemic, Casa Garden's board of directors, Los Niños Service League, made the difficult decision to cease operations effective Feb. 1.

"While we would love for them to stay open, we respect their decision," said Todd Koolakian, the Children's Home director of philanthropy.

Many Curtis Park neighbors volunteered at Casa Garden over the years – working in the kitchen, serving meals, cashiering, staffing special events and maintaining the garden outside the restaurant.

Before Fran Coletti of 26th Street became a volunteer, she enjoyed lunches at Casa Garden with friends. Her favorite dish was the turkey enchilada. She recalls the lemon chicken was everyone's favorite, also dill shrimp pasta salad in summer and apple cake in the fall.

Starting in 2013, Fran volunteered as a cashier during the lunch shifts, two to four times a month.

"There was a great group of hardworking, committed volunteers," Fran said. "The organization was so committed to helping kids. I will miss it; I have to give back in some way."

Ricki Bergado of Castro Way also started volunteering in 2013, averaging two serving shifts a month. During the December holidays, Ricki worked two or three times a week. "Servers and kitchen people were workhorses," Ricki said. "There were a gazillion different ways to volunteer."

Ricki also served on the restaurant's board. Drawing on her prior retail career, she organized two rummage sales that raised more than \$20,000 for the Children's Home. "The opportunities were limitless," Ricki recalled.

A favorite memory was the "Bling Fling," a luncheon to honor volunteers with milestone service hours. A volunteer rewrote classic songs for the "Casa Choir" to reflect the worlds of the kitchen and garden crews, and the customers.

Ricki's favorite menu item was the chocolate mint sin dessert, but her personal favorite was only available to volunteers. Prior to the lunch shift meeting to review



Photo/Courtesy of Casa Garden

Outdoor luncheon at Casa Garden Restaurant

details before service, volunteers would enjoy bran muffins warm from the oven. "I can just taste it."

Ricki said events in 2019 raised \$10,000 more than the previous year. "When the pandemic hit, Casa was on an upswing; I saw myself there for 10 more years."

As for the future, Todd said Children's Home board members and leadership are discussing how to repurpose the space. "Our hope is some sort of revenue-generating new purpose for the restaurant space," he said.

"We appreciate the Curtis Park community and restaurant support over the years. We're sad to see the place go and hope to find an adequate replacement," Todd said. "There is still a generosity in the Sacramento community that is encouraging. We're still here and essential."

Taylor's Kitchen staff raises funds for food bank

By Mindy Giles

The loyal band of professional foodies at Taylor's Kitchen creating "Paella for Purpose" has racked up yet another 100-person sellout, raising a little over \$4,200 for the Sacramento Food Bank. The donation qualified for a donor match, so the total amount headed to the Food Bank will be \$8,400.

Steve Nikkel, avowed Iberophile and head paella-maker, explained his fundraising motivation: "It starts with Linda (Reed-Nikkel) or I getting worked up about a specific cause – food insecurity, domestic violence, animal rescue, fire relief. We pull the team together and set a date. After planning the timeline, creating marketing and taking advance orders, it's about three days shopping and then three days of cooking."

The event is hosted by Taylor's Kitchen, which also donates many of the ingredients. The volunteer crew helps prep ingredients, assemble the tapas and

the paella orders and run the sales. Linda, Kathy Ebert and Julie Hawkins bake and package the cookies. Roxanne O'Brien makes the roasted Romesco sauce for the tapas and does most of the prep for the vegetables that go into the Spanish bomba rice extravaganza.

Keith Fergel, Taylor's Kitchen's manager, gets wine donations and runs the sales along with Fernando Pesquera. James To and Griselda of Taylor's Kitchen are the assembly team. All gratuities support the employees laid off because of COVID-19.

Area vendors donate red and white wines that go with the dominant flavors of the paella – saffron, sweet smoked paprika, chicken and Spanish chorizo.

These fundraisers are happening about every three months, and always sell out. So make your move when you see the next promotion, or check in regularly for info with the folks at Taylor's Kitchen.

Paella for two (plus tapas and bottle of wine) is \$75. Paella for one (plus tapas and a bottle of wine) is \$45.



Photo/Courtesy of Steve Nikkel

Steve Nikkel adds veggies to the paella he prepares for his quarterly paella dinner fundraiser.

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