

2nd Avenue agave plant having event of a lifetime

By Diana Sunseri

If you pass its way in your neighborhood travels, you can't help but notice the monstrous agave plant commandeering the northwest corner of Second Avenue and 22nd Street. The tumble of leathery leaves – some upright, some curvy – wave like bluish-green spears 10 or more feet in the air. With thorns edging its blades, the plant has the appearance of a prehistoric species.

The large succulent is turning heads anew these days, this time with a show and a bit of a mystery. A thick, Jack-in-the-Beanstalk stem suddenly sprouted from its core a few months ago, rising at least 20 feet in the air and climbing. Then the stem sprouted branches fringed with fingerlings of yellow flowers.

Neighbors say the sudden appearance of the giant stem has caused fascination, admiration – and worry. "I work from home, so I see people stopping to check it out literally 20 times a day," said Jessica Vega, who lives across the street. "They take photos of it, they take photos with it, people lay under it – I'm not sure why. It's amazing!"

Craig Reynolds of California Agave Ventures, a Yolo County agave grower, identified the plant as an *agave americana*, commonly called a century plant.

"They grow slowly for many years, then bloom only once in their lives, emitting a long central stem, the *quiote*," Reynolds said. If pollinated, the flowers eventually form seeds – "then the stalk and entire plant die." The seeds fall to the ground; some may produce new plants.

Not all agaves are monocarpic, a type of plant that flowers just once, then dies. The chemical change the *agave americana* goes through to produce the giant stalk, fruit and seeds takes all of the plant's energy. The mother literally gives her life for her future babies.



Photo/Diana Sunseri

Brothers Alex Johnson, 8, and Cooper Erwin, 11, both Bret Harte students, "make like blooming agaves" in front of the giant succulent putting on quite a show on Second Avenue.

She can also produce pups and future plants through underground horizontal stems called rhizomes, which the agave already has accomplished.

Most *agave americanas* live 10 to 30 years despite their "century plant" name, although an extremely well cared for *agave americana* in a university greenhouse in Michigan was 80 years old when it bloomed in 2014. The stalk grew so high that it burst through the greenhouse ceiling.

Neighbors estimate the Second Avenue agave is about 30 years old.

SCNA exceeds goal, raises over \$82,000 in Big Day of Giving

By Kathy Les

SCNA approached this year's Big Day of Giving with a steep goal and deep financial need after more than 14 months of the Sierra 2 Center's closure due to COVID-19. More than 400 donors this year contributed more than \$82,000, exceeding the \$75,000 goal.

With concern for the short-term finances of Sierra 2, SCNA set a particularly high goal for the May 6 fundraising event. Board members are expressing their gratitude for their neighbors' generosity.

This year's generous giving was aided by nearly 200 lawn signs around the neighborhood, 250 phone calls, hundreds of emails, social media posts and graphics with the theme of Help Us Gather Again, plus an easy-to-use donation link through the Sierra 2 website. Donors gave from \$15 to \$5,000 with two-thirds of donations over \$100, up from 60% last year.

Board members were each asked to raise \$1,000. Some did this by contributing that amount themselves and using it as a challenge to raise another \$1,000 from friends.

SCNA board member Jessica Bivens of Ninth Avenue vowed to raise \$5,000. She was able to reach that goal and even surpass it, due to generous donations from friends and family who contributed to her first fundraising event.

"I am a generous person and it didn't surprise me that my friends are generous as well, even if the cause did not benefit them directly," said Jessica, who raised more than \$5,000 from Curtis Park neighbors as well as personal friends as far away as New York.

"This year it was time for them to send their money to my cause," said Jessica. She matched her fundraising with \$5,000 of her own money.

Donors were asked what propelled their donation. All lauded the role of Sierra 2 in the neighborhood. Marshall Way's Jillian Rich's response was particularly poignant. Jillian grew up on the street where she still lives two doors away from her parents.

Please see Giving, Page 2



Public Land's shop dog, Yuca, hangs out

Not just a plant store – this shop has gifts and art. Page 6



Winner of Kickstart award plans to head toward retail space

Curtis Park business now offers a porch pick-up option via its website. Page 7



Bret Harte students return to classroom

Hybrid classes two days a week since April 8. Page 12



Home sale prices in 95818 ZIP code highest in county per square foot

By Dennis Cusick

Home sale prices in the 95818 ZIP code that includes most of Curtis Park were the most expensive per square foot in Sacramento County in the latest report by the Sacramento Association of Realtors.

The 19 homes in the area that sold in April averaged \$515 per square foot for 1,367 square feet, the Realtors group reported. In addition to most of Curtis Park, the 95818 ZIP code includes parts of the Land Park, Newton Booth and Poverty Ridge neighborhoods. The median sale price in the area was \$645,000.

All but one of the other top areas for price per square foot were in older city neighborhoods to the north and east of Curtis Park – Downtown, Midtown, East Sac and Oak Park/Elmhurst. The lone exception was Walnut Grove.

“The average dollar per square foot for a zip code is a function of how many homes sold in the zip code, their size and price,” explained Curtis Park Realtor Larry Easterling. “The smaller a home typically sells for a higher dollar per square foot and those numbers can vary greatly. The April 95818 sales included a 1,049-square-foot home that sold for \$614.87 a square foot on the high end and a 1,261-square-foot home that sold for \$366.77 on the low end.”

The sales price rankings per square foot were not the same as the overall price rankings. The top two median sale prices in the county – \$918,000 in rural Wilton and \$825,000 in Rancho Murieta – were for homes more than double the square footage of the average homes that sold in the 95818 ZIP code.

Also, the cheapest price per square foot – \$248 in Rancho Cordova – was in a ZIP code where the median sale price in April was \$580,000, far above the

April 2021 Home Prices in Sacramento County

HIGHEST PRICE/SQ FT					
ZIP code	Location	Price/sq. ft.	Average sq. ft.	Median price	Sales number
95818	Curtis Park/Land Park/Newton Booth	515	1367	645,000	19
95819	East Sac	490	1848	819,000	36
95690	Walnut Grove	469	1148	545,000	4
95816	Midtown/East Sac	453	1900	746,000	18
95811	Downtown/Midtown	452	1182	562,000	4
95817	Oak Park/Elmhurst	441	1322	560,000	13

LOWEST PRICE/SQ FT					
ZIP code	Location	Price/sq. ft.	Average sq. ft.	Median price	Sales number
95838	Del Paso Heights	275	1296	350,000	29
95823	South Sac	273	1467	385,000	43
95832	Meadowview	271	1505	431,000	5
95828	Florin	262	1635	404,500	41
95835	North Natomas	262	2217	522,500	60
95742	Rancho Cordova	248	2467	580,000	23

HIGHEST MEDIAN PRICE					
ZIP code	Location	Price/sq. ft.	Average sq. ft.	Median price	Sales number
95693	Wilton	356	2762	918,000	8
95683	Rancho Murieta	290	3014	825,000	11
95819	East Sac	490	1848	819,000	36
95816	Midtown/East Sac	453	1900	746,000	18
95630	Folsom	339	2238	685,000	97
95818	Curtis Park/Land Park/Newton Booth	515	1367	645,000	19

SOURCE: <https://www.sacrealtor.org/documents/statistics/2021/zipcodes/zipcodes-0421.pdf>.

county median price of \$489,500. The average home that sold in that Rancho Cordova ZIP code was 2,467 square feet.

“The numbers do show a strong trend of price increases as the combination of low interest rates and an influx of out-of-area buyers vie for our limited inventory,” Easterling said. “On the upside, we are not seeing the creative financing options used during the last bubble. The buyers who are buying now are fully qualified to do so.”

Of the 1,540 homes that sold in the county in April, the majority of sale prices were between \$450,000 and \$749,000. More than 93% of the homes were on the market less than 30 days.

Neighborhood yard sale scheduled for June 26

By Heather Hogan

The Curtis Park Yard Sale is set for Saturday, June 26.

Yard sale times will vary by homeowner but typically will start at 8 or 9 a.m. and end about noon or 1 p.m. Sale locations will be identified on a map the day before the yard sale.

Hundreds of bargain-hunting shoppers are expected to stroll, bike, skate, scooter and drive through our shady streets to scoop up bargains and help keep treasures out of the landfill.

Neighbors can team up to host a sale or enlist their whole block.

Register for free at <https://sierra2.org/>



event/yardsale/ with your sale’s address and a short description to be included on the printable and mobile-friendly map. SCNA will advertise the event on social media and other news outlets.

Giving: Donors gave generously to preserve the Sierra 2 Center

Continued from Page 1

“Whether it was a Girl Scout troop meeting, a community theater production or a quick trip to the playground after school, Sierra 2 was a central part of growing up in Curtis Park for me,” said Jillian. “I donated to the Big Day of Giving because I now have kids of my own and I want them to have the same experience I had.”

Also responding were several new residents, such as Lynette Komar of Portola Way who moved to Curtis Park in 2019. “Before the pandemic, I went to the Wine Tasting and Holiday Craft Fair,” said Lynette. “Those two events showed me how special Sierra 2 is to the community. I donated because I want to preserve this special place.”

Kathy Sananikone of Coleman

Way also had praise for her new neighborhood. “We looked for a neighborhood that has a great sense of community and Curtis Park is that perfect place,” she said. “One of Curtis Park’s many charms is Sierra 2 and all the programs it offers to the community.”



Photo/Rosanna Herber
Rosanna Herber and Executive Director Terri Shettle are all smiles with out-pouring of Big Day of Giving donations.

Sierra 2 staff hoping center gets green light to reopen soon

By Terri Shettle

Gov. Gavin Newsom's announcement in April that the state should be "open" by June 15 prompted hope and planning discussions with staff at Sierra 2 Center. While we had previously drafted operating plans for the day we finally got the green light to reopen, we did so with a lot of questions.

Today, we still have a lot of questions, but we also have more guidance on how to return to business gradually.

As of late May, we did not have clearance to offer any type of gatherings indoors at Sierra 2 Center. Some activities with modifications are allowable but not practical, such as religious gatherings and fitness classes, at 10% of space capacity.

When we reopen, hopefully sometime not long after June 15, we will do so with a specific schedule of activities. Attendees will be required to pre-register and masks will also be required. We will operate with limited

hours solely to support the scheduled activities. The building will not initially be open to walk-ins and the casual passerby.

As we head into unknown territory with reopening, we will schedule activities no further than a month out until we are sure we have the staffing, controls and resources to expand operations further.

"We will have regular, ongoing activities as well as one-time events like memorial services and receptions.

All activities and events will adhere to the state's guidelines for each tier of the Blueprint for a Safer Economy. Room use will be scheduled in such a

way that no rooms in close proximity are used at the same time and with turnover times of at least an hour for any space used to allow for cleaning and ventilation.

While this is a hopeful step forward, we recognize there will be adjustments as we layer in the varieties of activities and gatherings for which the Sierra 2 Center is known.

We are grateful for neighborhood support, tenants and the patience of our broader community. We are as anxious to get people back as they are anxious to gather again.

Terri Shettle is executive director of the Sierra 2 Center.

Dedicated volunteer AJ McClinton serves lunch to participants at a previous Free Friday event.

Photo/Joan Cusick



Volunteers needed to restart activities at Sierra 2 Senior Center in mid-June

By Katie Byram

The Sierra 2 Senior Center plans to restart select classes and activities in mid-June with the support of a volunteer program.

The Senior Center seeks a handful of passionate, independent and dedicated volunteers to join the administrative support team, helping with day-to-day operations, including greeting participants and answering questions, checking in participants for activities, assisting instructors, collecting donations and tidying and organizing communal spaces.

Volunteers and community support have been key

to keeping the Senior Center operating over the years, but the need for support is more crucial than ever as Sierra 2 seeks to reopen with fewer staff members and within recommended health and safety guidelines.

Volunteers must be 18 years of age or older, have a friendly disposition and be comfortable working independently. Interested volunteers can also become activity leads, hosting weekly or monthly groups or classes based on interests they are passionate about, such as games, gardening, writing or photography.

Anyone with free time and interest in volunteering for the Sierra 2 Center should apply online at sierra2.org/volunteer.

New COVID cases down more than 50% in 95818 ZIP code

By Mike Scheible

New reported COVID-19 infections in the area that includes most of Curtis Park have declined by more than 50% in the last month, according to Sacramento County data released May 17.

The 22,000 residents of the Curtis Park, Land Park, Newton Booth and Poverty Ridge neighborhoods in the 95818 ZIP code logged a total of 931 COVID-19 cases as of May 17, but just 35 in the previous month. New infections averaged eight per week in the first two weeks of May compared with 25 per week in early April and about 45 cases per week during California's COVID-19 peak in late 2020.

The decline in local cases has accompanied a steady increase in vaccinations. Some 11,160 residents of the area – 65% of those age 16 or older – were fully vaccinated as of mid-May. This was almost a 50% increase from 7,500 in mid-April. Countywide, about 45% of those age 16 or older are fully vaccinated.

COVID-19 is the name of the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The virus predominantly affects the respiratory system, which means individuals with pre-existing conditions involving the respiratory system – asthma, cardiovascular disease and damaged lungs from smoking and air pollution – are at greatest risk once infected.

More current data may be seen at: <https://sac-epidemiology.maps.arcgis.com/>.



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Viewpoint wants your story ideas

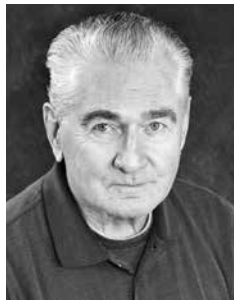
Viewpoint appreciates neighbors who submit news about their babies, new neighbors, milestones and special events, as well as letters to the editor and opinions.

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.

BILL HOOVER

SCNA Board
President



President's message

Big Day of Giving results demonstrate support for Sierra 2

A month has passed since the Big Day of Giving. I am still in awe of and humbled by the outpouring of support for the Sierra 2 Center. While many thought setting a \$75,000 goal was a stretch, the results – more than \$82,000 raised – confirmed my belief that Sierra 2 holds special meaning for the Curtis Park neighborhood. (See Page 1 for Kathy Les' detailed report.)

Every \$20,000 we raise buys us another month. If all goes well, we should be good through November. By then, we hope that Sierra 2 rents and usage will have begun to pick up as restrictions continue to lessen. Until Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds run out sometime in late July, the Big Day of Giving funds will be used to cover the approximately \$2,000 monthly deficits not within the PPP funds parameters. Once PPP funds are expended, the Big Day funds will be used for the ongoing monthly expenses while Sierra 2's cash flow improves.

This scenario will be impacted by how quickly restrictions are removed; most could be removed by the time you read this article. At worst, if restrictions

remain, the Big Day funds should carry us into November.

Though COVID rates for the immediate present remain high, I am optimistic that increased vaccinations and awareness will cause a drop sooner than later.

Keep in mind the eclectic nature of Sierra 2 operations and the fact that any restrictions could vary widely based on the nature of the activity. (Sierra 2 Executive Director Terri Shettle addresses this issue in her article on Page 3.)

I offer my sincerest thanks and appreciation for a job well done. That bottle of good wine I mentioned last month was, as promised, opened and a toast was offered to each and every one of you.

A final note: If you are not an SCNA member, consider joining. Be a part of something special. If you are an SCNA member, consider joining the board. The board can always use folks dedicated to making Curtis Park a great place to live and raise a family. And, even if you are unable to join now, consider volunteering. Thanks.

Notes from May 5 SCNA board meeting

Loans forgiven, but revenue shortfall remains

Paycheck Protection Program loans to SCNA of \$80,000 and \$13,000 have been forgiven, SCNA Treasurer **John Bailey** reported. He said SCNA is still operating at a considerable revenue shortfall, but he hopes Big Day of Giving fundraising will help plug the short-term hole.

The city has confirmed that its insurance will cover the cost to repair the storm-damaged roof over the day care wing, but not the cost to remove and replace solar panels and tree trimming to accommodate reroofing work. **Gerre Buehler** confirmed the solar panels are in fine condition and can be reused.

A bid on new flooring for Studio 2 was higher than expected. More bids are being pursued. Tenant lease negotiations will start July 1.

Sierra 2 Center Executive Director **Terri Shettle** gave the board a preliminary sketch of when and in what order Sierra 2 might reopen, if pandemic numbers continue to improve. The Sierra 2 office has received lots of calls and reservations for bookings.

Terri is getting requests about the Wine Tasting event. The Development Committee will discuss the best options at its next meeting.

Neighborhood Concerns Committee Chair **Erik Fay** said the committee is planning to bring in more outside speakers to discuss issues of concern. The committee recently met with the city Department of Youth, Parks and Community to discuss the proposed Park Enrichment Master Plan. Committee members offered a broad wish list for William Curtis Park.

The multi-family project planned for 24th Street and Castro Way is expected to start construction in August and finish in spring 2022.

Kathy Les described the Curtis Park Electric Stars, an initiative she heads up advocating electric retrofitting of existing homes to help reduce regional carbon generation. The group hopes to partner with SMUD and possibly become an ad hoc committee.

Mario Guerrero, chair of the Sacramento Community Police Review Commission, recently met with the SCNA Racial Justice Ad Hoc Committee and outlined recommendations to City Council in hopes that SCNA will support police reforms.

A letter of support for the proposed Montgomery Way Historic District was unanimously approved. A letter of support for enforcement of the city's tree ordinance was approved to be sent to the city.

The next SCNA board meeting will be from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. June 2 via Zoom.

— *Bruce Pierini, board secretary*

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Congratulations

to our CURTIS PARK GRADUATES

HIGH SCHOOL

Sydney Quinn Acosta, granddaughter of Carol and Peter Blackman of 26th Street, graduated from Heritage Peak Charter School. She is heading to UC Santa Cruz in the fall and is interested in studying literature and psychology.



Cole Kerksieck, grandson of Jill Correll of Marshall Way and Margie Kerksieck of 24th Street, and son of Christopher Kerksieck, formerly of 24th Street, graduated from C.K. McClatchy High School. He will attend Sacramento City College in the fall.



Finnegan McFetridge, son of Shawn Downey McFetridge of 24th Street, graduated from C.K. McClatchy High School and is headed to Santa Barbara Community College in the fall.



Natalia Arzbaeher, daughter of Cecilia and Bill Arzbaeher of Fifth Avenue, graduated from C.K. McClatchy High School in the HISP program. In the fall, she will begin studies at UC San Diego, majoring in biological sciences.



Andrew "Drew" Klassen graduated from C.K. McClatchy High School. He is the son of Keith and Char Klassen of Third Avenue. Drew plans to attend Sacramento City College in the fall.



Sophia Peavy, daughter of Tom and Josie Peavy of 23rd Street, graduated from C.K. McClatchy High School. Her plans are to major in molecular, cell and developmental biology at UCLA. (Sophia has delivered *Viewpoint* for the last 10 years.)



COLLEGE

Rocco Bonsignore, son of Robin Brewer and Robert Bonsignore of East Curtis Drive, graduated from C.K. McClatchy High School. Rocco plans to attend Sacramento City College.



Alex LeForestier, son of Marc LeForestier and Mary-Beth Moylan of Seventh Avenue, graduated from University of the Pacific with a BA in political science. Alex was a four-year starter on the UOP Tigers NCAA Division I baseball team.



Danielle "Kiki" Velez, daughter of Cecilia Velez of Third Avenue, and Richard Velez, earned a BS in civil and environmental engineering at Stanford University. She will work at the Natural Resources Defense Council.



Isabella Grace Bright, daughter of Brook and Gina Bright of Portola Way, graduated from Visions University Prep. Isabella will attend Sacramento City College with the hope of transferring to UC Santa Cruz.



Cole Smith-Crowley, son of Shannon and Blane Smith-Crowley of Montgomery Way, earned his J.D. from UC Hastings Law School and MBA from UC Davis Graduate School of Management. He is looking for a job in renewable and sustainable technology.



Bianca Alexandria Velez, daughter of Cecilia Velez of Third Avenue, and Richard Velez, earned her J.D. and graduated with honors from the University of San Francisco School of Law. She plans to take the California bar exam in July.



Diego Espinosa, son of Robert Espinosa and Tammy Zimmer of Third Avenue, graduated from C.K. McClatchy High School. He will attend UC Santa Cruz in the fall.



SIERRA 2 CENTER
SIERRA CURTIS
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Couple operate Public Land as homage to culture of West

By Lily M. Harris

Public Land at 21st Street and First Avenue is not just a plant store. It is “the culmination of a lot of life lived,” said owners Austin McManus and Mel Eligon.

Established in 2018, Public Land sells an eclectic mix of flora – specializing in cactuses and tropical plants – and sundry household items. There is a strong stylistic theme of the Southwest running throughout, inspired by the owners’ travels.

“We are city kids who just ended up going to nature way too much at some point because we got sick of the cities,” McManus said. “I think natural progression of camping and hiking is that you’re going to start getting interested in the fauna and flora ... maybe not everybody, but we did.”

Over the years, the married couple found themselves avoiding national parks, which they felt were becoming too crowded, opting instead to spend time in remote areas under the control of the Bureau of Land Management otherwise known as “public lands.” They decided to name their shop Public Land as an homage to the West and the extensive open lands that have thus far avoided privatization.

McManus and Eligon met in San Francisco, and spent time in the art scenes in Los Angeles and New York. McManus was photography director and editor for Juxtapoz, an art and culture magazine. Eligon worked as a freelance fashion editor. Sacramento, though, was where they wanted to open Public Land.

They found what they considered the perfect location in Curtis Park – a large, bright space where plants, and especially cactuses, could thrive. McManus happened upon the vacant space while walking their dog, Yuca. He jumped on it, contacting the owner immediately. The owner was skeptical about the business model at first, but decided to give McManus and Eligon a chance. After the couple fitted out the building and repainted, the owner came around, complimenting them on how nice the space looked.

Public Land is also an art gallery, exhibiting works from California artists. Before the pandemic, Public Land hosted art openings. On those evenings, the wrap-around windows would steam with the heat of the socializing crowd indoors. From the outside, the space looked like a giant greenhouse.



Photo/Joan Cusick

Austin McManus and Mel Eligon opened Public Land in 2018 to feature California's artists, cactuses and tropical plants and items.

For McManus, the art gallery and the openings are the heart of Public Land and the most enjoyable part of the business. “The art openings, when people would spend time here, the array of characters who would show up, that to me was when I was happiest,” he said. “It’s what we were working for, involving a ton of different people from different backgrounds in one space and getting people who were never really into art into art.”

The pandemic has put an end to packed, indoor showings for now. With vaccinations becoming widely available,

and the worst of the pandemic seemingly in the past, the not-too-distant future may see their return. In the meantime, Public Land is still showing art, which customers can view in the back gallery during store hours.

Public Land is open Tuesday to Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Although McManus and Eligon do not live in Curtis Park – “We wish, we wish,” he said – their shop has become a 21st Street fixture. The couple can often be found there, along with their dog, Yuca.

Yelp rates Pangaea Burger among area’s best

By Dennis Cusick

Curtis Park’s Pangaea Bier Café is among the top restaurants on Yelp’s Spring Collection of “places to find the perfect burger” in the Sacramento area.

Yelp described Pangaea as “much more than just a craft beer bar... They are proud to be the home of the two-time Sacramento Burger Battle Champion Burger, the Pangaea Burger.”

Pangaea, 2743 Franklin Blvd., received four and a half stars based on 827 customer reviews. Others receiving the highest rating are Burger Patch, 2301 K St.; Flip ‘n Shake, 4708 Auburn Blvd., and Monsoon Burger, 4740 Natomas Blvd.

Six restaurants received four stars, the second-highest rating, including Oak Park Brewing, 3614 Broadway, which the review described as a “local brewery with popular burger favorites including the Impossible

burger and Whiskey burger.”


The other restaurants with four stars are Broderick, 319 W. Sixth St., West Sacramento; Buck & Sadie’s, 2030 Douglas Blvd., Roseville; Burger Junction, 7900 Florin Rd.; Burger Lounge, 1198 Roseville Parkway, Roseville; and Burgers and Brew, 1409 R St.

Yelp is a San Francisco-based company that operates a website with crowd-sourced customer reviews of businesses.




Photo/Joan Cusick

Rob Archie, owner, Pangaea Bier Café



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COOK REALTY

Carmazzi Caramel Corn winner of \$5,000 grant

By Kelsey Wehseles

Local favorite Carmazzi Caramel Corn recently was one of 43 women-owned businesses nominated for the Sacramento Republic FC Kickstart award. After a significant interview process, Carmazzi Caramel Corn won the grand prize.

"Winning the grand prize grant earned \$5,000 which I will use to help continue the growth of the business," said owner Karen Carmazzi. "The heart of Carmazzi Caramel Corn has been and will always be Sacramento."

Carmazzi Caramel Corn operates out of a licensed home kitchen on Eighth Avenue. However, the business is quickly expanding and currently looking for a retail space.

The business started as a fundraiser when owner Karen Carmazzi's son was planning a trip to Europe and needed

to raise money. The following year, her daughter did the same fundraiser for her trip. "Pretty soon people assumed it was a business and were placing reorders, and thus, I decided to turn it into a business instead of a fundraiser," said Karen.

Since January 2017, the business has involved the whole family. Karen's son, with an agricultural business degree from Cal Poly and a diverse food-processing background, works full-time for the business as vice president of operations. Her daughters help out from time to time, and her husband does most of the shopping.

"Last week I had my sister-in-law and mom help with the labeling," said Karen. The recipe is a family tradition, starting with Karen's grandmother (Grandmother Marie), who would make the caramel corn as a holiday treat. To this day, the recipe is a closely guarded family secret.



Karen Carmazzi displays one of her many caramel corn products that one can order online or pick up at her house.

Photo/Judy Harper

Carmazzi Caramel Corn products are made in a nut-free kitchen. They contain no soy, gluten, or high-fructose corn syrup. There is also a vegan option that uses Earth Balance instead of butter. Currently, the most popular item is the gift box of classic caramel corn; however, the newly introduced mini tins are gaining popularity.

The business operates online, shipping caramel corn as far as New York. But with the warm weather, the chocolate items cannot be shipped. There is a

porch pick-up option on the website for customers to get their orders directly from Karen's house.

"I enjoy decorating my porch with themes and holidays to make my customers' porch pick-up experience fun!" she said. Local neighborhood drop-offs are available upon request.

Carmazzi Caramel Corn also can be found at Curtis Park Market and Taylor's Market.

For more information, visit carmazzicaramelcorn.com.

Birds of Curtis Park

Black phoebes live year-round in area, dine on flying insects

By Dan Murphy

The only flycatcher regularly seen in the neighborhood is the black phoebe. Indeed, black phoebes reside with us throughout the year.

Known as the photographer's friend, they are bold and approachable. Conveniently, they perch and sally after flying insects at eye level. They draw attention with a downward wag and fanning of the tail and a regularly repeated short call.

"Phoebe" is onomatopoeic; it is taken from the call of the related eastern phoebe. The black phoebe's call is a buzzy "ptziee."

Male and female black phoebes look the same. The only variant touch of color they display is rusty or cinnamon bars on the wings and feather fringes of

juveniles. The young are raised to fledglings in nest sites that are often reused by the same pair of parents over the five or six breeding seasons of their life span. The nest sites are selected by the female from possibilities suggested by the male during courtship displays.

The nests are constructed on walls or other vertical surfaces, preferably under an overhang. Nests are constructed by flinging pellets of mud that adhere to the surface and gradually build up into a cup that is lined with plant material. The one to six eggs are usually brooded by the female. Both parents feed the young.

The requirement of nearby mud for nest construction constrains the suitable breeding areas for black phoebes. Unlike most birds, their breeding range and success has increased as a result of human development.

Black phoebes are insectivores, with a usual diet of bees and wasps, flies, beetles, damselflies, dragonflies and spiders. However, their affinity for water has led to one unusual diet item – minnows.

If you see a bird that you cannot name, there are a couple of free apps and programs that can help with identification. The Merlin Bird ID smart phone app,



Black phoebes' affinity for water has led to their unusual taste for minnows.

Photo/Dan Murphy

by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is easy to use. After a few simple multiple-choice questions (location, date seen, size, colors and behavior), Merlin provides a selection of photos of possible answers. So if you input, sequentially, "Sacramento", "today", "sparrow sized", "black" and "white", and "in trees or bushes", the fourth photo that pops up is a black phoebe.

Often, you can hear a bird singing plainly, but never get a good look at it. Birds singing, calling or even drumming on a tree can often be identified by BirdNet, another free app (or computer download) from Cornell Lab. If you record a clear snippet of vocalization with your smart phone, the BirdNET app will upload it, quickly process the sound and return a list of likely prospects.

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POINT OF VIEW

Some lives depend on presence of leaf litter

By Mary Lou Flint

The loud, irritating sound of leaf blowers is ubiquitous in Curtis Park. Neighbors frequently complain about the noise, dust and carbon dioxide emissions from the gas engines that propel them.

But does anyone consider what all this leaf blowing is doing to the living parts of our ecosystem? What drives this urgent need to remove every leaf in a planting bed or from under every shrub and tree every week year-round?

Leaves, twigs and other plant material that fall naturally to the ground make up an important soil surface layer that scientists call leaf litter. Hundreds of organisms make their homes in leaf litter, all part of a complicated food web that breaks down organic matter, nourishes the soil and feeds a huge variety of animals



Photo/Jack Kelly Clark, UC IPM

Immature millepedes breaking down the leaf litter.

from spiders, worms and beetles to song birds and frogs.

When you remove leaf litter on a regular basis, you destroy this ecosystem. Organic matter gives better structure to the soil and replenishes it with nitrogen, phosphorous and other minerals that plants need to grow. Leaf litter holds moisture, reduces soil compaction and erosion and moderates temperatures in winter and summer. It

is natural mulch and free fertilizer.

Many organisms are essential to the proper functioning of the leaf litter ecosystem. A vast variety of bacteria, fungi, nematodes, worms, insects and other invertebrates work together to build a healthy, living soil. Springtails, mites, millipedes, earthworms, etc. break down leaves in concert with specialized fungi and bacteria. A host of predators such as beetles, spiders, ants, pseudoscorpions and centipedes are at the next level of the food chain, providing sustenance to birds and other animals and also natural biological control of insect pests on our landscape or food plants.

In my little corner of Curtis Park between 10th Avenue, Cutter Way and East Curtis Drive, we have a population of Pacific chorus frogs that sing loudly at night from January through summer. These tiny

amphibians require water for their short tadpole stage, but spend most of their lives sheltering in leaf litter or thick plant growth. I would be sorry if the increasing use of leaf blowers silenced them.

If you remove the leaf litter every week, you lose all this, and the quality of your garden ecosystem suffers. What is wrong with a few leaves under your plants anyway? An inch or so of leaf litter is healthy and not unattractive. In fall or spring or anytime when leaf litter gets too thick, thin it, preferably by hand or with a small rake.

If you go in with a leaf blower, use a gentler electric one no more than every few months. The birds and frogs will thank you.

Mary Louise Flint is an extension entomologist emerita with the Department of Entomology and Nematology at UC Davis.

La Famiglia plans another lasagna box dinner June 11

La Famiglia caterers Leo Forget and Jeff Roberts have responded to neighbors' requests for another lasagna box dinner on June 11.

The menu features Chicken Parmesan, including a choice of lasagna Bolognese with meat or vegetarian lasagna Alfredo, Caesar salad, bread sticks and cannoli.

The minimum order is an Italian dinner kit for two for \$35. Additional meal kits are \$17.50 per person.

To place an order, call Leo Forget at 916 470-5849. All orders must be prepaid by credit card by June 7. All major credit cards are accepted.

Pickup will be from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Friday, June 11, 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.

Forget and Roberts have operated their business out of the Garden Room kitchen at Sierra 2 for nearly 25 years. They have been generous with their support of SCNA participating in the annual Wine Tasting & Silent Auction and donating meal services to board retreats and staff gatherings.



Photo/Brenda McCulloch

Hosted by Craig and Brenda McCulloch, attendees included neighbors Joan Muttera, Will So-hal, Susan Lane, Linda White, Alan Wade, Simon and Linda Haines, Nina Bookbinder, Richard Walters, Bruce Pierini and Wayne Anderson. They are planning another festive get-together for the upcoming June 11 lasagna dinner from La Famiglia Catering at Sierra 2.

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Trees in Curtis Park

Some neighborhood trees are begging for water – others are drowning in it

By Dan Pskowski

If only trees could talk and tell us when they are thirsty.

Wilted leaves are an obvious sign that a tree requires water. That usually happens on newly planted and young trees.

Established trees have an extensive root system, which may access the underground water table, a neighbor's yard where the manicured lawn is irrigated five days a week or a leaking irrigation or sewer line. When an established tree is subject to drought conditions, there may be leaf drop, stunted growth, dead branches or exudates (bleeding) on the limbs or trunk.

Diagnosing tree problems can be challenging because you must determine if the symptoms are caused by an insect, disease, soil condition, culturing practice

or a combination of factors. Trees that are dying make miraculous recoveries just from proper watering. During the drought Sacramento experienced from 2012 to 2016, trees died because residents stopped watering their lawns due to restrictions. However, watering once a month could have preserved a lot of trees.

Conversely, trees also die or warrant removal due to overwatering. The challenge is determining what is the right dose for the tree. You want the soil to dry out between waterings. Saturated soils over an extended period deprive the roots of oxygen and predispose them to disease pathogens such as *armillaria* and *phytophthora*.

Understanding your soil condition is one key to giving the tree the right amount of water. Soil conditions in the neighborhood can vary from block to block. Clay soils do not drain as well as silt loam, as is evident in William Curtis

Park during heavy rains. There will be standing water in the south area of the park while at the north end you can walk on the turf.

Hardpan is a layer of soil largely impervious to water and which roots cannot penetrate. It can be a few inches to many feet below the surface. There are shallow hardpan layers north of Second Avenue between 24th and 28th streets. In other areas of the neighborhood, the hardpan is at a 3-foot depth. With hardpan you must be careful not to overwater or groundwater can accumulate above the water table and the hardpan.

Tree species and depth of rooting are other determining factors to consider when watering. Native oaks and drought-tolerant species like Chinese pistache or cork oak, once established, do not require regular summer watering. However, if these trees are in a turf area or have received regular watering, some changes are required.

Make sure sprinklers are not spraying the base of the trunk. Create a turf-free area at least three feet all the way around the base of the tree and install mulch. Reduce the amount of water by 10-20% over the summer. Monitor the tree's health and continue to reduce the amount of summer watering.

Native oaks and drought-tolerant species may need a summer watering, if there is an extended drought. I have seen native oaks die because a new homeowner wanted to correct the prior owner's mistake and completely cut off the summer watering.

Established non-native trees require deep watering during hot summers. Due to the sizeable canopy, the tree accesses all the moisture at the lower

depths from the prior winter rains. The goal is moist soil 8 to 24 inches below the surface. Once this area has adequate moisture, then the weekly watering done for the lawn or landscape will prevent the subsurface soil from rapidly drying out.

Deep watering can be accomplished using a soaker hose, garden hose sprinkler or automatic irrigation system. The soaker hose needs to be on three to four hours before moving it unless there is runoff. Using a garden hose sprinkler, water until there is runoff, then move the sprinkler to a different spot and keep moving it until you have covered all the open soil area. With an automatic irrigation system, manually turn on and track the time to see when runoff occurs. Then wait an hour or so and run the cycle for the specified time.

With all three methods, you need to dig down to measure the depth of the watering. The soil should be moist and sticky, not dry and crumbly. Remember, roots can extend beyond the drip line, which is the outer tips of the branches. Therefore, deep water the entire yard.

Monthly deep watering in June, July, and August should be sufficient for established trees. Due to the meager rainfall this past winter, trees would especially benefit from the additional water.

Adding a 4- to 6-inch layer of wood chip mulch under the dripline of the tree is one of the best things to improve tree health. A layer of mulch conserves water, improves the soil microorganisms and fertility and helps prevent weeds.

Spend a little time understanding your tree's water needs and you will have beautiful trees to enjoy.

Kepi Ghoulie to perform June 12 at the Side Door

The Side Door concert hall at Franklin Boulevard and Fourth Avenue has started booking live shows again for a limited audience.

The first two shows sold out.

Tickets are available for Kepi Ghoulie's performance at 7 p.m. Saturday, June 12.

With a cartoony voice, a love of the Ramones and an inclusive spirit, Ghoulie injects his funny and



friendly music with warm feelings and lots of hooks. Starting out as the leader of the pop-punk Groovie Ghoulies, he also has explored country, folk, kids music and just plain fun rock 'n' roll.

Also appearing at the Side Door will be Rita Hosking on June 18, the Richard March Band on July 3, and the Bastard Sons of Johnny Cash on July 15.

See thesidedoor.net for times and ticket prices.

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RIVER CITY TAPS

Water resource expert Peter Brostrom, 58

By Andrea Rosen

Peter Nils Brostrom of Third Avenue died suddenly of a heart attack in late March while working at the Salton Sea as a consultant helping Southern California water districts execute a dust mitigation plan through planting native flora and fauna.

He had recently retired as a state water resource scientist. He was 58.

Peter is survived by his wife of 18 years, MaryClaire Robinson; daughters Teaghan and Piper



Photo/MaryClaire Robinson
Peter Nils Brostrom

Brostrom; brother Nathan of Berkeley; and sisters Molly of Oakland, and Natalie of Santa Cruz.

Peter spent part of his childhood in Ethiopia, where his parents were Lutheran missionaries. After college, Peter returned to Africa with the Peace Corps in Burkina Faso.

Peter received a bachelor's degree in agronomy and a master's degree in soil sciences at UC Davis.

Peter's family became residents of Curtis Park in 2006. They relished the fact that most of their lives could be lived within a two-mile radius. Peter loved riding his bike to the state Department of Water Resources offices at 10th and P streets. The girls chose the public Spanish-immersion Language Academy of Sacramento charter school at 2850 49th St. The family's church, St. John's Lutheran Church on L Street, is within biking distance during good weather.

Some years ago, Peter attended a meeting organized

by McClatchy High School students who told horror stories about the danger they faced trying to ride their bikes to school. Peter joined the effort to get traffic calming and bike lanes installed on Freeport Boulevard.

While attending UC Davis, he competed on the rowing team. Later, he had no place to continue his sport, so he helped start the River City Rowing Club. Peter could be spotted on his porch often at 5 a.m. working out on a rowing machine.

Through the rowing club, Peter met the late *Sacramento Bee* political cartoonist Rex Babin, who was also a rower. They became fast friends.

"Pete was a gift to everyone who knew him," said Kathleen Babin, "and he was there for Rex and for me during and after my husband's difficult fight with cancer."

MaryClaire said Peter organized Rex Babin's memorial service at St. John's Lutheran Church.

Gifts in Peter's memory may be made to the Teaghan and Piper Brostrom Education Fund (www.gofundme.com/f/teaghan-and-piper-brostrom-education-fund).

In the District

A week in the life of a councilmember is never boring

Over the years, I have written quite a bit about homelessness, supporting our young people, Aggie Square and our response to the pandemic. Here's "a week in the life" of what our office has been working on for the week of May 17.

Monday is mostly catch-up on meetings. For May 17, the list includes a meeting with city staff on cannabis policy, an interview with *Sactown Magazine* concerning Regional Transit, a District 5 staff meeting that includes an update on our district budget, a staff briefing on Citywide Performance measures and an afternoon meeting with representatives of Sac Kids First about a potential ballot measure in 2022. The evening is light, a virtual event with Mercy Housing about its 220-unit affordable housing project on Stockton Boulevard.

Tuesday mornings are generally spent at my "day job" as a consultant. My elected day starts at 1 p.m. with

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the Law and Legislation Committee hearing that I chair. The main issue for discussion will be aligning rules around Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), specifically, streamlining review, permit processing and increasing our housing supply. At 2 p.m., we have a Housing Authority/City Council meeting – the council also sits as the Housing Authority. At 5 p.m., we have our standing City Council meeting. These two meetings will focus on homelessness, affordable housing, cannabis equity and the beginnings of our 2021-22 budget deliberations, which likely will go long into the night.

Wednesday starts with a meeting with my designee and chair of the Measure U Committee, Dr. Flojaune Cofer, to hear the committee's budget recommendations. After a quick staff meeting, I will convene the first of four workshops on the needs of the Sacramento business community. This is an effort to inform how the city should best spend federal recovery funds to jump-start the post-pandemic Sacramento economy.

Wednesday evening includes our semi-annual Neighborhood Leaders convening, where we do our best to get a handle on issues our many neighborhoods are facing. We will also announce a new round of District 5 Neighborhood Seed grants.

Thursday begins with the Sacramento Area Council of Governments board meeting. I then check in with our Fines and Fees initiative and the Stockton Boulevard Partnership. A final meeting with my colleague Councilmember Eric

Guerra rounds out the afternoon. A neighborhood association meeting finishes the evening.

Friday is a light one; I'll use the time to catch up on my non-city work and also begin to prepare for the next week.

This is a standard week, although there really is no standard. What I've laid out above does not include prep time for City Council meetings and the many boards and commissions on which I sit, policy discussions with friends and allies or returning constituent calls.

And none of this includes our office responses to the hundreds of inquiries we receive each week or the larger initiatives we have to meet the challenges facing the city.

Of course, I could not accomplish any of this without a terrific staff – Allison, Jasleen, Hilary and Ulisses.

It remains an honor to represent the district and the city. It certainly is never boring.

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Photo Special to Viewpoint

Stakeout on 25th Street

Law enforcement officers blocked off 25th Street between Marshall Way and Fourth Avenue the afternoon of May 20 while they served a search warrant in connection with the investigation of two Clarksburg residential burglaries earlier in the month. With the assistance of Sacramento police SWAT and POP teams, Yolo County detectives seized seven firearms, coins and other property that had been taken from the Clarksburg residences, according to a statement from the Yolo County Sheriff's Department. Nathaniel Pope, 45 and Michael Hennessy, 57, both of Sacramento, were arrested on charges of burglary and grand theft, the Yolo County statement said. Both suspects were booked into the Yolo County jail.

New parents excited to be in renovated home – finally

By Dennis Cusick

Erik Cuadros and Katy Zils married in 2018, settled in rental housing in Land Park, and began looking for a home in which to raise a family.

Two years ago, they found a two-story Arts & Crafts bungalow on Portola Way in desperate need of renovation. Neighbors who toured it then noted it had dated kitchen cabinets and a bathroom in the center of the first floor, which anyone heading upstairs had to pass through. The stairs to the basement were also inside the bathroom.

Still, Katy and Erik saw potential. The clincher was the front porch.

Two years and a total renovation later, they have moved in.

"We gutted the whole thing," Katy said. "There wasn't a room we didn't change, only the basement was unchanged – and the front porch. We basically bought it for the front porch."

Six months ago, while the renovation proceeded, baby **Jakob** was born.

"We're really excited to be in the neighborhood



Photo/Joan Cusick

The front porch attracted Erik Cuadros and Katy Zils to the house where they plan to raise a family. Jakob was born during the two-year renovation.

and especially Portola Way," Katy said. "Everybody is so friendly. This is where we're excited to be raising a family."

Erik and Katy met in law school at UC Davis. Katy is in-house counsel for Molina Health Care. Erik is an administrative law judge with the state Public Employment Relations Board.

More grads to appear in July

If you haven't sent your grad's portrait and information for this issue of *Viewpoint*, there is time to get it together for the July edition.

For each graduate, please include name, parents' names, street in Curtis Park, graduate's school, plans for college or travel or employment or military, and phone number.

Please email photo and text to: carolxo@comcast.net. The deadline is June 10.



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Students' energy picking up after return to Bret Harte

By Lauren Gothard
and Lindsey Sin



Welcome back!

Bret Harte Elementary School reopened its doors April 8 for hybrid learning. After more than a year of distance learning, students and teachers returned to the classroom. Teachers have been instructing some students in-person and others virtually, four days a week.

The response from students and families has been overwhelmingly positive. "It seems to be going well, with about half of our students back for in-person learning," said Principal James Tucker. Prior to May 18 each classroom was divided into two cohorts: Students attend Tuesdays and Wednesdays or Thursdays and Fridays, for three hours per day. But with the additional relaxation of COVID restrictions, all classrooms, except the fifth grade, can now attend together four days a week, as one cohort. The last day of the school year will be June 17.

While not a complete return to pre-COVID instruction, kids are still enjoying outdoor play and interactions with friends and classmates they had seen very little of during the previous 13 months. For some children, April was the first time they'd ever met their teacher in person, rather than through a computer screen.

"The kids were low-energy when they came back, but over the last month, their engagement has really increased," Tucker said. It took time for the kids to re-establish normal rhythms and peer camaraderie, but after a month in the classroom, Tucker can see the change.

Sacramento City Unified School District established protocols for learning prior to the students'



Photo/Lindsey Sin

Before entering the classroom, students must go through a health check. Student Maxwell Sin gets his temperature scanned with the auto thermometer after he answers health-related questions.

For some children, April 8 was the first time they'd ever met their teacher in person, rather than through a computer screen.

return to campus. Accordingly, students are greeted each morning by the principal and a health aide, a position created by the district as part of its Return Together: 2020-2021 School Plan.

"We have a socially distanced health screening in front of the school in the morning," Tucker said. "I check names on my cohort list and ask health-related screening questions. Students sanitize their hands, get their temperatures taken, and the health aide inspects their physical appearance." The average screening

takes less than five minutes and the students seem at ease with the process. First grader Maxwell Sin said, "I don't mind having my temperature taken. It's pretty easy."

Once students complete the health screening inside the cafeteria, they head to the blacktop and wait for their teacher to take them to the classroom.

The after-school program Target Excellence also returned to Bret Harte in April, extending the day on campus from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Target Excellence staff provides lunch, help with homework, outdoor games and social-emotional learning activities. Director Rochelle Nazareno believes her staff and students are adjusting well to returning to campus, despite how different the program looks due to COVID.

"It's going really well and we are doing the best we can with what we have," said Nazareno, whose program is serving about 80 students a week in person. "We are glad we reopened."

Bret Harte attendance clerk Sonia Carrillo also has children in third and sixth grades at the school. She said the transition from full-time distance learning to hybrid learning has gone well for her family. "At first I was afraid to send my children back, but I know it is better for my kids," she said. As a staff member, Carrillo feels safe at work, due to the protocols and safety precautions in place. Since returning to campus, Carrillo's initial fear for her kids has changed. "There really is nothing to be afraid of; let your kids come back. It's going to be good for them," she said.

The big question for families and teachers is what learning will look like in the fall. The city school board adopted a resolution April 22 supporting a full return to in-person instruction.

Whatever happens in fall, Bret Harte is well prepared to welcome students to the new school year in one form or another. For now, everyone's just happy to be back together.

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