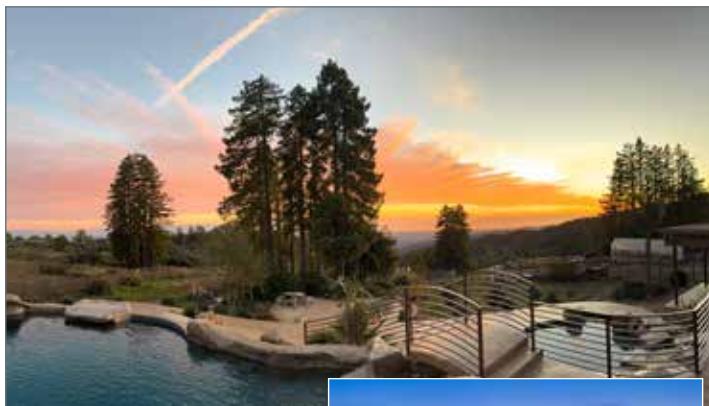


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February  
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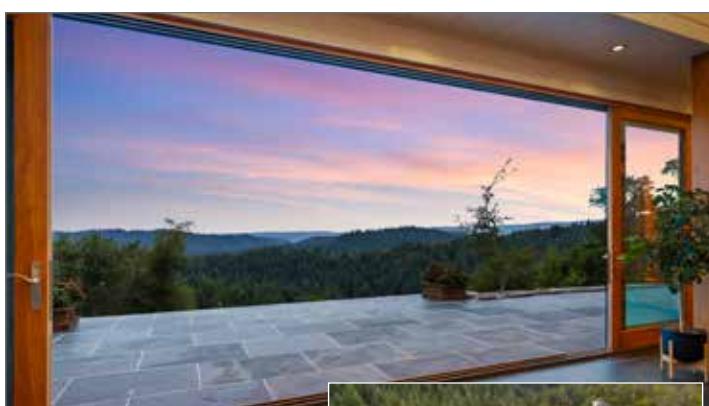
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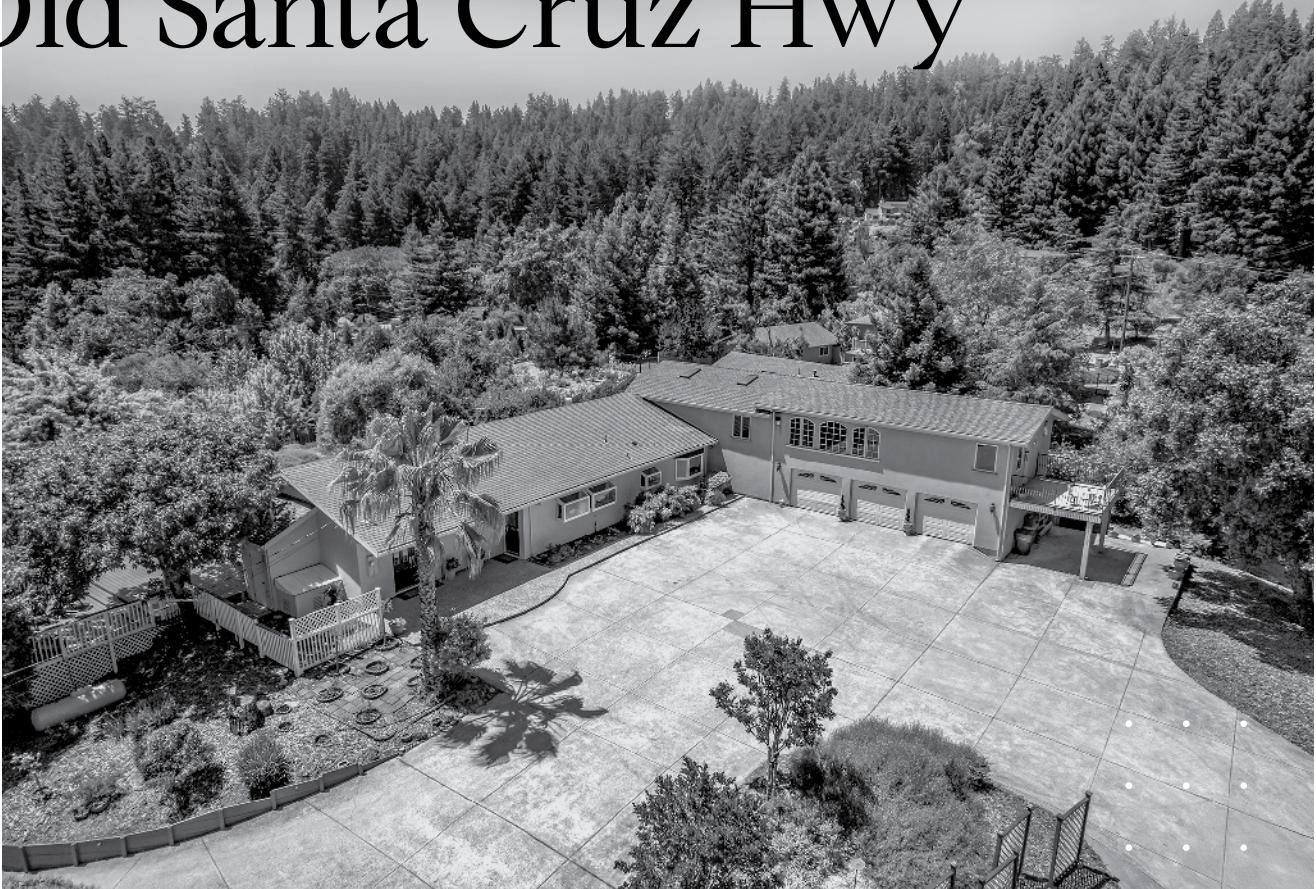
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**3 Bath 3860**

**Sq Ft**

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**COMPASS**

**The February issue of  
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**2026 Ad Rates**

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Frequency discounts available.

Classified and business directory \$9 per formatted line

**Circulation**

More than 4000 homes and businesses  
in the Santa Cruz Mountains



**Our Cover**

**Photo by**  
**Lia von Damm**

**Happy Valentine's Day**

Mother Nature  
sometimes arranges  
her work  
into the shape of a heart.

Subtle  
but unmistakable,  
it is like a  
small sign of affection  
in the landscape.

Lia photographed this  
heart-shaped cluster  
of Toyon berries  
growing along  
Locust Drive  
in Aldercroft Heights.

Happy Valentines Day  
from  
Mother Nature  
and the MNN

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Call Kathy McKinney at 408-529-1431  
or email [kathy@paralleldesign.com](mailto:kathy@paralleldesign.com).

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# events

## Burrell School Vineyards and Winery

### February Events

Rich Leonetti

Join us in the Burrell School tasting room for Valentine's Day, **Saturday February 14**, from noon to 5 p.m. Bring your Valentine to the winery and enjoy some amazing wines, chocolates, and vineyard views. It's a great way to begin your evening or just relax and enjoy the day.

We will also be open on President's Day, **Monday, February 16**, from noon to 5 p.m. Join us at the winery and tip a glass.

The Santa Cruz Mountain Wineries Passport Day is on **Saturday, February 21**,



from noon to 5 p.m. Come by the winery and pick up a passport. You'll receive a free tasting and discounts on purchases at our winery. This wine passport provides access to over 30 participating local wineries. Passports are valid for one year from the date of purchase and entitle the bearer to one tasting experience per participating winery. Wineries open on non-passport days will accept passports during their regular hours of operation.

Stop by the tasting room for more information, or visit [winesofthesantacruzmountains.com](http://winesofthesantacruzmountains.com).



Photo by Robin Porter

A banner for a Valentine's Day event. It features a cluster of red roses on the left. The text 'Valentine's Day Wine and Chocolate' is written in a script font, with 'Valentine's Day' and 'Chocolate' in white and 'Wine and' in a darker shade. Below that, 'Saturday Feb 14th 12pm-5pm' is written in white. On the right, there is a partial view of an American flag.

### President's Day Tasting Room **OPEN**

Monday Feb 16th 12pm-5pm



Burrell School  
Vineyards & Winery

### TASTING ROOM / PRIVATE EVENTS

#### Tasting Room Hours

Friday-Sunday 12pm-6pm

24060 Summit Road  
Los Gatos, CA 95033

(408) 353-6290  
[burrellschool.com](http://burrellschool.com)

A poster for the Migration Festival on Valentine's Day. It features a blue whale tail on the left, a seal on the right, and a butterfly at the top. The text 'Migration Festival on Valentine's Day' is at the top, followed by 'Saturday, February 14 11 am to 4 pm' and 'Natural Bridges State Beach'. Below that, it says 'Celebrate the amazing animals that migrate to and through Monterey Bay!'

### Natural Bridges State Beach

#### Migration Festival

Kathy McKinney

Natural Bridges State Beach hosts the 40th Annual Migration Festival on **Saturday, February 14**, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Community organizations will be there with family-friendly, hands-on activities and booths highlighting the migration of whales, butterflies, birds, and the many creatures that travel to and through this fascinating area.

There will be a passport with stamps at each table for the children, food for sale, arts and crafts, informative talks about sharks and whales, and more. Enjoy live music by the Wave Tones with slide Hawaiian player Patti Maxine and the park 5M's Band (Mostly Mediocre Musical Monarch Mariposas).

This event is free, but parking is \$10 at state parks. There is also free, but limited parking on Delaware Avenue, if you're willing to walk a short distance. Hold on to that receipt! Once you have paid for parking at one state park, you have paid for them all for that day. There are over 14 state parks and beaches in Santa Cruz County alone.

Natural Bridges State Beach is located at 2531 West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz.

### Los Gatos Kiwanis Club

#### Los Gatos Creek Trail Cleanup

The Los Gatos Kiwanis Club and the Key Club from Los Gatos High School are organizing a Los Gatos Creek Trail clean-up day on **Saturday, February 14**, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Meet at 10 a.m. at the public parking lot behind 55 Church Street, at the trailhead and the Old Forbes Mill building (not the steakhouse). The Los Gatos Kiwanis Club will provide gloves, trash bags, and pick-up tools, along with light snacks and beverages.

This event is weather permitting. Email [kiwanislosgatos@gmail.com](mailto:kiwanislosgatos@gmail.com) to confirm.

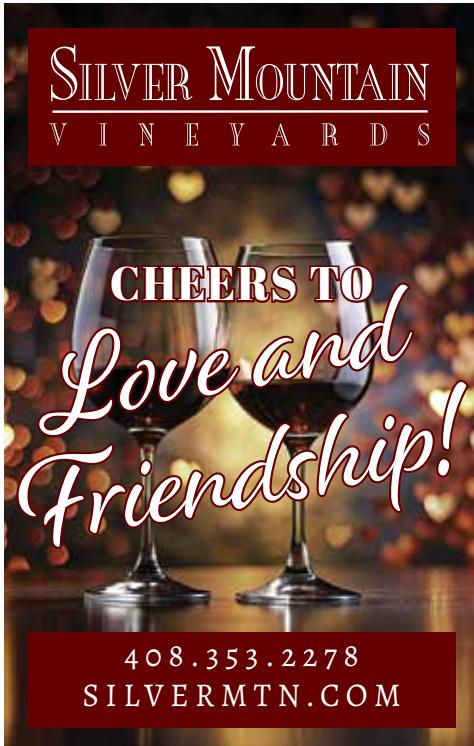
# events



## Goodwill Donation Drive

Clean out your closets and mark your calendars for a Goodwill donation drive on **Saturday, February 7**, at C.T. English Middle School, 23800 Summit Road. We will accept donations from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Goodwill Silicon Valley can't accept furniture, mattresses, large appliances, exercise equipment, automobile parts, weapons, household trash, food, carpeting, construction debris, hazardous household chemicals, liquids of any kind, pet-related items, items over 50 pounds, and television sets with over 27-inch screens. They can accept microwaves, VCRs, printers, and vacuums in good working order.



## Los Gatos Community Concert

### Poulenc Trio

Diane Vande Pol

Enjoy a captivating afternoon of music in downtown Los Gatos. The Los Gatos Community Concert Association presents the Poulenc Trio at the Los Gatos High School Theatre on **Sunday, February 22**. Known for their engaging performances that seamlessly blend classical and contemporary works, the Poulenc Trio is a powerhouse in the chamber-music scene.

Founded in 2003, the Poulenc Trio is an American oboe-bassoon-piano ensemble. Over the years, they have garnered praise for their remarkable technical skills and emotional depth. They consistently deliver performances that resonate with audiences. Critics have dubbed their concerts as "robustly thrilling" and "sensitive," appealing to both classical aficionados and general music lovers alike.

The trio's repertoire is vibrant and diverse. They are distinguished as the most active touring piano-wind chamber music ensemble globally. For more than 20 years, they have performed in 46 states and at renowned music festivals worldwide.

Doors open at 2 p.m. and the concert begins at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$30 for adults, \$25 for seniors, \$5 for students, and \$65 for a family pass.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [lgcca.org](http://lgcca.org). Experience a performance that promises to be both thrilling and enriching as you indulge in the harmonious melodies crafted by the Poulenc Trio.

*Photo by Titilayo Ayangade*





### Santa Cruz County Fifth District Town-Hall Meeting

Office of Monica Martinez

Santa Cruz County Supervisor Monica Martinez will host a town-hall meeting on **Tuesday, February 3**, from 6 to 7:30 p.m., at the Felton Community Hall, 6191 Highway 9. Monica oversees the county's Fifth District, which covers the area west of Highway 17 from Summit/Skyline to roughly Empire Grade Road/Felton/Scotts Valley.

This is an opportunity to learn about the county's strategic plan and how it will impact the future of the Fifth District. Share what matters most to you, whether it's storm response, road conditions, rebuilding, wildfire preparedness, pedestrian safety, access to county services, and more. Learn about a wide range of programs, services, and resources available in our community.

Your voice matters! Sharing your perspective and concerns will help ensure your priorities are reflected in county decision-making. Your feedback will help guide future projects in our district.

To find out more about Santa Cruz County's strategic plan, visit [www.santacruzcountyca.gov/VisionSantaCruz.aspx](http://www.santacruzcountyca.gov/VisionSantaCruz.aspx). For more information about the town hall meeting, or if you have any questions for Monica, call 831-454-2200 or email [fifth.district@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:fifth.district@santacruzcountyca.gov).

### Los Gatos Rotary Club Crab Feed and Auction

The Rotary Club of Los Gatos hosts their annual all-you-can-eat crab feed and auction on **Saturday, February 7**, beginning at 5 p.m., at St. Andrews Episcopal Church, 13601 Saratoga Avenue in Saratoga.

Proceeds benefit the Los Gatos Rotary Charities Foundation, which provides grants for non-profit organizations. This year, their "fund-the-need" project is to raise \$15,000 to pay for 26 young burn survivors to attend San Jose Firefighters Burn Foundation's Burn Camp. This camp offers burn survivors a place where they are understood, accepted, and free to just be children.

Help raise money for this and other worthy causes. Bid on auction items while you enjoy all-you-can eat crab, soup, salad, bread, pasta, and dessert. Vegetarian options will be offered, and beer and wine will be available for purchase. Tickets are \$40 for children, \$100 for adults.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [losgatosrotary.org/stories/crabfest-and-auction](http://losgatosrotary.org/stories/crabfest-and-auction).



### Pizzeria Vittoria Super Bowl watch party

Mike Lerman

Bring your friends and join your neighbors for a Super Bowl watch party at Pizzeria Vittoria in Redwood Estates, on **Sunday, February 8**. For just \$35 for adults and \$20 for children, enjoy endless pizza, salad, wings, and sausage while you watch the game. Seating is limited, so get your reservations at [pizzeriavittoria.com](http://pizzeriavittoria.com).

Pizzeria Vittoria offers brunch specials every Friday through Sunday, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Enjoy breakfast burritos, breakfast pizzas, micheladas, mimosas, plus coffee and hot chocolate. Brunch specials are available for dine-in, takeout, and delivery.



**Get the word out.**

**Promote your  
local event in the  
Mountain Network News.**

**Submissions are due  
the 10th of the month  
prior to publication.**

**Email  
[kathy@paralleldesign.com](mailto:kathy@paralleldesign.com)  
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# community

## Lisac General Engineering Clearing the Path to Safety

Marko Lisac

For residents of the Santa Cruz Mountains, the beauty of our natural landscape comes with a responsibility to be prepared. Wildfire is an ever-present threat, and creating defensible space around our homes and properties is one of the most effective ways to mitigate that risk.

For decades, Lisac General Engineering has been a trusted partner for landowners in this critical work. Rooted in the Santa Cruz Mountains, Lisac is a local company with a deep understanding of the unique challenges and regulations of our area. Our commitment to safety, reliability, and respect for the land has earned us a reputation for excellence.

We offer a range of services to help protect your property and enhance your peace of mind. Our expertise in land clearing, defensible-space creation, grading, and forest mastication ensures that your project is completed with precision and care. We understand that every property is unique and work

closely with clients to develop a plan that meets their specific needs and budget.

This commitment to client satisfaction is reflected in testimonials from homeowners who have entrusted their properties to Lisac. John Stevens praises their "clear communication and professional property clearing." Another client, Mary Jameson, highlights their defensible-space creation as a key factor in her family's safety and peace of mind.

In a region where the threat of wildfire is a constant concern, Lisac General Engineering provides an essential service.

Contact Lisac General Engineering today to schedule a consultation and take the first step toward a safer, more secure property. Call 408-963-6556, email [info@lisacge.com](mailto:info@lisacge.com), or visit our website at [lisacge.com](http://lisacge.com).



*A mountain property before (top) and after (bottom) land clearing*

## Lago Lomita Vineyards

### Unified

Robin Porter

The Unified Wine and Grape Symposium is held in Sacramento every January. It takes over the convention center and several buildings downtown to accommodate over 10,000 people from the wine industry. Educational seminars examine the wine industry in our state and worldwide.

In a huge exhibit hall, vendors display fencing options, bottling materials, ballerina-sheep vendors for weed mowing, and wine-grape-processing equipment like crushers and de-stemmers. There is a falconer there, with falcons, waiting to take on your gopher problem. Need an owl box? Unified has you covered. (It was here that I learned a mountain lion can easily jump an 18-foot-tall fence.)

Some of the equipment in the exhibit hall is huge, and I wonder how they got it inside. This photo shows a straddle or over-the-row tractor. It is used in flat vineyards. The operator rides ten feet in the air above each row of vines, which typically grow over six-feet tall. These tractors drive over each vineyard row for multiple operations, such as pruning and harvest. It can also do mowing, leaf thinning, and spraying.

Next time you drive through the Central Valley, look for these impressive and expensive beasts out in the vineyards. The Pellenc tractor in the photo costs over \$490,000, and attachments cost extra. It is surrounded by signs that say, "Financing Available!" It was fun to walk through the vertical slot and see how very small I am compared to this big yellow monster.

Our fellow Santa Cruz Mountains grape growers and vintners often meet up at Unified for dinner. Everyone brings a sample of the best wines from their vineyards. We enjoy the great food, wine, and friendship as we share stories about our vineyards and wineries.





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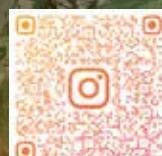
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## The Lock-In Effect

### Why Homeowners Are Stuck (and Loving It)

Keith Kanady

Let's talk about something that's locking up the real-estate market tighter than a jar of pickles: interest rates! Specifically, the lock-in effect. It's a big deal, and here's why.

Right now, 54 percent of homeowners with mortgages are living the dream, with interest rates at or below 4.5 percent. Many of them locked in these historically low rates during the pandemic, when borrowing money was very inexpensive. Some lucky folks are sitting on mortgage-interest rates as low as two to three percent.

Today, mortgage rates have dipped to around 6.2 percent, the lowest in about a year, but they are still much higher than those pandemic-era rates. That's where the lock-in effect comes into play.

#### Why Homeowners Are Staying Put.

Imagine you're a homeowner with a three-percent mortgage rate. Selling your home means taking on a new loan at today's higher rates. Ouch! Even if you're ready for a change, a bigger monthly payment can make anyone think twice.

It's not just about the rates. Rising property



taxes, higher insurance costs, and the general expense of moving all add to the hesitation. The result? Homeowners are staying put, and fewer homes are hitting the market. This tight inventory keeps prices high, making it harder for buyers to find affordable options.

**The Silver Lining.** Here's the good news: interest rates today are 7.4 percent lower than they were a year ago. There's hope that rates will continue to drop as monetary policy softens. While the lock-in effect is keeping things tight for now, there's light at the end of the tunnel.

**What Does This Mean for You?** If you're a buyer, patience is key. Keep an eye on the market and be ready to act when the right opportunity comes along. If you're a homeowner thinking about selling, it's worth crunching the numbers. With the right strategy, you might find that making a move is more doable than you think.

The lock-in effect might feel like a roadblock, but it's not permanent. Markets shift, rates change, and opportunities arise. Until then, stay informed, stay prepared, and remember, every lock has a key! It's become easier to open lately.



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## Summit Veterinary Hospital

### Pet Dental Health

Fahimeh Zibaei

Did you know that over 70 percent of cats and dogs show signs of dental disease by age three? Pet dental health is one of the most overlooked aspects of pet care, yet it plays a major role in your pet's overall well-being. February is National Pet Dental Health Month, making it the perfect time to learn how a healthy mouth can mean a healthier and happier pet.

#### Why Pet Dental Care Is So Important.

Just like humans, pets can develop plaque and tartar that lead to gingivitis, tooth decay, and painful periodontal disease. Left untreated, bacteria from the mouth can enter the bloodstream and cause serious issues affecting the heart, liver, and kidneys.

Common signs of dental trouble include bad breath, yellow or brown buildup on teeth, red or bleeding gums, drooling or dropping food, swelling around the mouth, pawing at the face, or hesitating to eat or chew. If your pet shows any of these signs, it may be time for a dental exam.

A complete dental cleaning goes far beyond brushing. Under anesthesia, we can thoroughly remove tartar above and

below the gumline, polish teeth to slow future tartar buildup, obtain dental X-rays to identify hidden issues, extract painful or infected teeth if necessary, and evaluate gum health and track early disease.

Regular dental care can prevent pain, infections, and future costly procedures.

### Summit Veterinary Hospital Dental Promotion in February and March

To celebrate Pet Dental Health Month and help more pets enjoy healthier smiles, we're offering 20 percent off professional dental cleanings. This offer is valid **February 1 through March 31**.

The \$750 cleaning includes a full oral exam, general anesthesia, ultrasonic scaling and polishing, and an antibiotic injection. It doesn't include bloodwork, medications that may need to go home, or extractions.

Limited spaces are available. Call us today to make an appointment and give your pet the fresh, healthy smile they deserve.



### UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP!



**Summit Veterinary Hospital**

[www.summitvethospital.com](http://www.summitvethospital.com)

23291 Summit Road • Los Gatos, CA 95033 • (408) 353-1113



Dr. Zibaei, DVM



### Fundraising Goal Met Meet You at the Stables!

Rachael Parakh

You did it! In record time with record generosity, community members donated, advocated, and volunteered to help Bear Creek Stables reach our contract fundraising goal with MidPen. This milestone will allow us to bring important nature and equine programs to Bear Creek Stables.

Mounted Patrol Foundation and Bay Area Barns & Trails helped us cross the finish line and matched contributions made on our behalf. Friends of Bear Creek Stables is now finalizing contract negotiations with MidPen. We will be planning classes, camps, and workshops soon.

What an inspiring way to start the new year. With your help, Bear Creek Stables will soon bring joy, wonder, and healing here in the Bay Area. Visit [friendsofbearcreekstables.org](http://friendsofbearcreekstables.org) for more details.

### YOU DID IT!

#### Funding Chart



# community

## Los Gatos Lions Club Supporting Therapy Dogs at Los Gatos High School

At a school board meeting last month, the Los Gatos Lions Club presented the Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union School District with a \$20,000 check to provide funding for canine comfort dogs at the Los Gatos High School Wellness Center.

The Wellness Center hosts six dogs every week. A different dog comes every day, and two come on Mondays. They typically stay for four hours.

The Wellness Center is a space where students can come during the school day if they feel anxious, overwhelmed, or stressed and need a place to rest, reset, recharge, or use coping strategies. When students are in distress, engaging with these friendly dogs can be an invaluable comfort.

This is just one of many local school programs and community organizations the Los Gatos Lions Club supports. To find out more, visit [www.lglions.org](http://www.lglions.org).

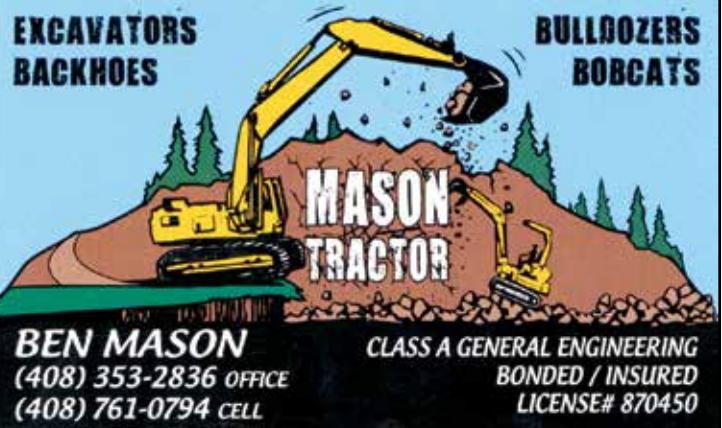


Rick Dentoni  
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**Planned Pethood**  
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**Spay and Neuter Services**

Kathy McKinney

Spaying and neutering pets can be expensive, but it's one of the most effective ways to reduce pet overpopulation, ease the strain on animal shelters, and improve the health of companion animals.

Did you know that Santa Cruz County has a mandatory sterilization ordinance that requires pet owners to spay or neuter all dogs or cats over the age of six months, unless the owner has an unaltered animal certification? While I don't believe that ordinance is strictly enforced, it's not a bad idea.

Both Santa Cruz and Santa Clara counties offer resources for pet owners who may need financial assistance for this important procedure.

**Santa Cruz County.** The Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter will offer 200 low cost and subsidized spay/neuter surgeries at a "planned pethood" clinic, on **February 20, 21, and 22**. These are available only to Santa Cruz County residents. Appointments are first-come, first-served.

This service is available to healthy dogs and cats between two months and eight years of age, that weigh between two to 80 pounds. Pets with very short noses (pugs, bulldogs, Persian cats), dogs that weigh more than 80

pounds, and pets over age eight should have spay/neuter surgery done by a full-service veterinarian.

Cat owners pay \$150, but residents on public assistance pay \$75. Dog owners pay \$300, but residents on public assistance pay \$150. The service includes spay/neuter surgery, a microchip for permanent identification, and vaccination (FVRCP for cats, DHPP for dogs, and rabies for dogs and cats over four months of age). All dogs over four months of age living in Santa Cruz County must be licensed. The \$29 license fee for spayed/neutered dogs is not included.

For more information, visit [www.scanimalsshelter.org/planned-pethood](http://www.scanimalsshelter.org/planned-pethood) or call 831-454-7200.

**Santa Clara County.** For residents of the unincorporated area of Santa Clara County, including the Santa Cruz Mountains, spay and neuter services are available on a limited basis through the county's Animal Service



Center. They offer fee waivers for residents on public assistance. The regular fees are \$130 for cats, \$265 for male dogs, \$395 for female dogs under 25 pounds, and \$665 for female dogs over 25 pounds. For more information, visit [animals.santaclaracounty.gov](http://animals.santaclaracounty.gov), choose the "Services and resources" drop-down menu, and select "Spay and neuter program."



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**COMPASS**

# adventures

## Soaring Without a Parachute

### Indoor Skydiving

Kathy McKinney

I've always wanted to try skydiving, but the idea of jumping out of an airplane thousands of feet in the air is a hard "no" for me. Indoor skydiving is much more my speed, so this month's adventure took us to iFLY in Union City. There, we experienced the thrill of flying for a few minutes, without the parachute and the horrifying (to me) fright of an airplane exit.

The vertical wind tunnel at iFLY is a large chamber that blows a smooth cushion of air upward at high speed, strong enough to support your body weight in mid-air. This creates a freefall sensation similar to that of skydiving, but in a relatively safe, controlled indoor environment.

We arrived a few minutes before our flight time, which gave us an opportunity to watch other fliers and get an idea of what to expect. Our session began with a short orientation. Our instructor explained the basics of body



posture and showed us hand signals he would be using to direct us in the wind tunnel. We were each fitted with a flight suit, helmet, goggles, and ear protection.

Our group of eight fliers ranged in age from 10 to 65. We entered the wind tunnel one at a time, with our instructor guiding our movements and helping us achieve a stable flying position. Getting in the air was as easy as leaning forward. The 80- to

175-mile-per-hour winds generated by four powerful fans did all the heavy lifting.

Depending on the package you purchase, flights are between 60 to 80 seconds. We opted for a total of four minutes of flight time, which we did in three 80-second flights. That doesn't sound like a lot of flying time, but it's fairly strenuous. Most beginners opt for two 60-second flights.

While our flights hovered six to eight feet above the netted floor of the wind tunnel, the youngest person in our group opted to purchase a high flight. Our instructor flew with the child to the top of the wind tunnel, and while it looked like fun, there was quite a bit of spinning involved. A couple of people in our group were experienced fliers, and it was fun to watch them demonstrate flips, dives, and other maneuvers during their flights.

**Who Can Fly?** Flyers can start as young as three years old. There's no upper-age limit, as long as participants meet health guidelines and weight restrictions. Participants with a hard cast or hard prosthetic that cannot be removed are not permitted to fly. People who are pregnant or with current or prior head, neck, back, or shoulder injuries should not fly.



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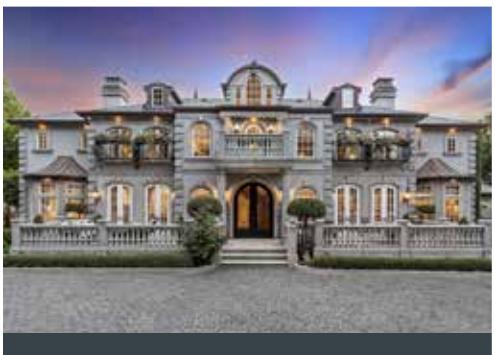


**Family Owned & Operated**

The iFLY experience may not boast the spectacular views provided by jumping from a plane, but it does allow you to "fly" without having to worry about a parachute. It's the perfect introduction to skydiving, even if you're afraid of heights.

iFLY is located at 31310 Alvarado-Niles Road in Union City. Depending on traffic, it's about an hour's drive from Summiteen. They are open Tuesdays through Sundays. Ticket packages start at \$93 per person. Hours, tickets, and more information are at [www.iflyworld.com](http://www.iflyworld.com).

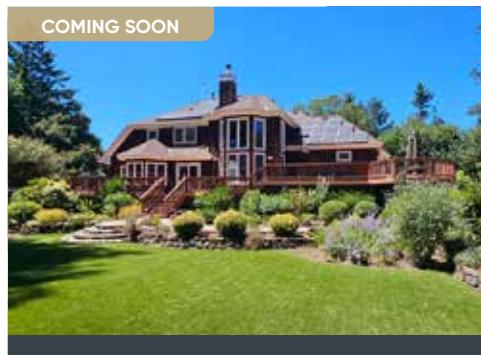




**15253 MONTALVO ROAD**  
Saratoga | \$12,800,000  
5 Beds | 5.5 Baths | 5,490 SF | 0.94 Acres



**23020 OLD SANTA CRUZ HWY**  
Los Gatos | \$7,995,000  
5 Beds | 5.5 Baths  
7,454 SF + 1,750 SF ADU | 29.37 Acres



**21631 SUMMIT ROAD**  
Los Gatos | \$3,400,000  
5 Beds | 3.5 Baths | 3,659 SF | 4.5 Acres



**24595 SKYLAND ROAD**  
Los Gatos | \$2,500,000  
4 Beds | 3.5 Baths | 3,403 SF | 24.15 Acres



**600 RIDGE TOP ROAD**  
Los Gatos | \$2,495,000  
3 Beds | 3.5 Baths | 3,322 SF | 13 Acres



**22430 SUMMIT ROAD**  
Los Gatos | \$1,950,000  
3 Beds | 2 Baths | 1,892 SF | 1.39 Acres  
+ 650 SF APT | 1 Bed | 1 Bath



**19118 OLD VINEYARD ROAD**  
Los Gatos | \$1,699,000  
3 Beds | 2.5 Baths | 1,923 SF | 1.18 Acres



**21386 SUNNYSIDE ROAD**  
Los Gatos | \$1,675,000  
3 Beds | 3 Baths | 2,889 SF | 11,356 SF Lot



**24035 STAGE STOP WAY**  
Los Gatos | \$1,588,000  
3 Beds | 2.5 Baths | 2,889 SF | 2.5 Acres



**489 NORTHRIDGE DRIVE**  
Scotts Valley | \$1,499,000  
3 Beds | 2.5 Baths | 2,401 SF | 0.74 Acres



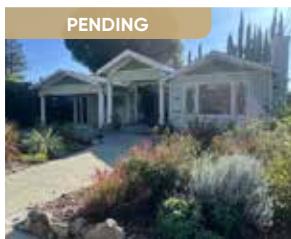
**20080 GIST ROAD**  
Los Gatos | \$975,000  
1 Bed | 1 Bath | 750 SF | 1.23 Acres  
with Sunny Building Pad & Valley Views!



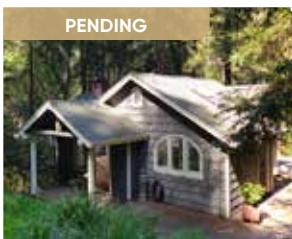
**8386 RIESLING WAY**  
San Jose | \$764,000  
2 Beds | 2 Baths | 1,497 SF



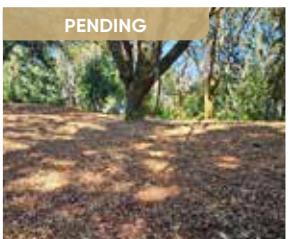
**20245 GIST ROAD**  
Los Gatos | \$550,000  
Vacant Lot with Building Pad  
Site Approval | Valley Views | 3.57 Acres



**1160 FEWTRELL DRIVE**  
Campbell | \$1,999,000  
2 Beds | 2 Baths  
2,012 SF | 8,040 SF Lot



**20900 COMANCHE DRIVE**  
Los Gatos | \$1,599,000  
4 Beds | 3 Baths | 2,912 SF | 1 Acre



**SUMMIT ROAD/VIRDELLE DRIVE**  
Los Gatos | \$499,000  
Vacant Lots | 2APNs Total 1.13 Acres  
Usable Land | Excellent Location



**15105 OLD JAPANESE ROAD**  
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3 Beds | 3 Baths | 2,216 SF | 4.77 Acres



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# calendar

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### Sunday, February 1

Burrell School Winery and Vineyards annual wine and crab feed from 2 to 5 p.m. For more information, visit [burrellschool.com](http://burrellschool.com).

### Tuesday, February 3

Santa Cruz County Fifth District Supervisor Monica Martinez hosts a town-hall meeting from 6 to 7:30 p.m., at the Felton Community Hall, 6191 Highway 9.

### Saturday, February 7

Goodwill donation drive at C.T. English Middle School, 23800 Summit Road, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The Rotary Club of Los Gatos crab feed and auction begins at 5 p.m., at St. Andrews Episcopal Church, 13601 Saratoga Avenue in Saratoga. Information and tickets are at [losgatosrotary.org](http://losgatosrotary.org).

### Sunday, February 8

Super Bowl watch party at Pizzeria Vittoria in Redwood Estates. Endless pizza, salad, wings, and sausage for just \$35 (\$20 for children). Reservations at [pizzeriavittoria.com](http://pizzeriavittoria.com).

### Thursday, February 12

The Bookmobile visits the mountains: **Lakeside School**, 9:45 to 11:45 a.m. **Building Blocks Preschool**, 12:15 to 12:45 p.m. and 2:30 to 3:45 p.m. **Redwood Estates Pavilion**, 4:15 to 5:15 p.m.



### Saturday, February 14

Migration Festival at Natural Bridges State Beach, 2531 West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Family-friendly activities, informative talks, live music, and more. Free.

Los Gatos Creek Trail cleanup day, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Meet at the public parking lot behind 55 Church Street, at the Old Forbes Mill building. Gloves, trash bags, pick-up tools, light snacks, and beverages will be provided. This event is weather-permitting. Email [kiwanislosgatos@gmail.com](mailto:kiwanislosgatos@gmail.com).

### Saturday, February 21

Santa Cruz Mountain Wineries Passport Day. Purchase a wine passport good for one free tasting experience at 30 participating local wineries for one year. For more information, drop by the Burrell School Winery and Vineyards or visit [winesofthesantacruzmountains.com](http://winesofthesantacruzmountains.com).

### Sunday, February 22

The Los Gatos Community Concert Association hosts the Poulenc Trio at the Los Gatos High School Theatre. Doors open at 2 p.m. and the concert begins at 2:30 p.m. Information and tickets are at [lgcca.org](http://lgcca.org).

### Thursday, February 26

The Bookmobile visits the mountains: **Lakeside School**, 9:45 to 11:45 a.m. **Building Blocks Preschool**, 12:15 to 12:45 p.m. and 2:30 to 3:45 p.m. **Redwood Estates Pavilion**, 4:15 to 5:15 p.m.

### March 28

Mark your calendar for the "Lakeside in Wonderland" auction at the Lakeside School Community Center. [www.lakesidescf.org](http://lakesidescf.org)

## ON-GOING CLASSES AND MEETINGS

### Mondays

Alcoholics Anonymous meets at Skyland Church, 8 p.m. Join us on Zoom: Meeting ID 364 362 970, PW: 046518

Outdoor yoga on the mountain, 10:15 to 11:30 a.m. Email [anouk@anoukyoga.com](mailto:anouk@anoukyoga.com) for information.

### Tuesdays

Town walking group meets at 9:30 a.m. at the Adult Recreation Center, 123 Main Street in Los Gatos. Vinyasa Flow from 9 to 10 a.m. Book at [www.cupsofyoga.com](http://www.cupsofyoga.com), or call Jaime at 831-200-8802.

Qigong class on Zoom from 9 to 10:30 a.m. Email [Amandaring@gmail.com](mailto:Amandaring@gmail.com) for information and Zoom URL.

Gentle Restorative Yoga with Amy Schendel from 6 to 7 p.m. Book at [www.cupsofyoga.com](http://www.cupsofyoga.com), or call Jaime at 831-200-8802.

### Wednesdays

Flow and Unwind yoga with Erin from 5:30 to 6:30 pm. Book at [www.cupsofyoga.com](http://www.cupsofyoga.com), or call Jaime at 831-200-8802.

### Thursdays

Gentle Flow from 9 to 10 a.m. [www.cupsofyoga.com](http://www.cupsofyoga.com), or call 831-200-8802.

Loma Prieta Amateur Radio Club meets the first Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Burrell CDF station on Highland Way.

Alcoholics Anonymous, Redwood Estates Pavilion, 7:30 p.m.

### Fridays

Power-inspired Vinyasa from noon to 1 p.m. Book at [www.cupsofyoga.com](http://www.cupsofyoga.com), or call Jaime at 831-200-8802.

### Saturdays

Summit Speakers meets on Zoom from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. For more information, call 408-497-5102, or email [smbeauchamp885@gmail.com](mailto:smbeauchamp885@gmail.com).

Summit Ultimate Frisbee meets from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Loma Prieta Elementary School field. More information at [summitfrisbee.org](http://summitfrisbee.org).

### Sundays

Summit Ultimate Frisbee meets from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Loma Prieta Elementary School field. More information at [summitfrisbee.org](http://summitfrisbee.org).

Vinyasa Flow from 9 to 10 a.m., and Gentle Flow 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Book at [www.cupsofyoga.com](http://www.cupsofyoga.com), or call 831-200-8802.

# exploring

## Walking between Rains

### Local Walks

Neil Wiley

Early January rains interfered with my plans for longer hikes. It was a good time to revisit interesting places where you can walk closer to home. Here are a few examples near me.

**Summit Trails.** You can choose between two local Summit Road trails. One runs east 1.3 miles on the north side of Summit Road. It starts across the road from the eastern entrance to the Villa del Monte subdivision, and extends to Loma Prieta Avenue and Summit Store. The other trail goes west 1.4 miles from Del Monte Way along the south side to Old Summit Road.

The two trails have much in common. They are narrow, poorly maintained, and a bit close to Summit Road traffic. On the other hand (or foot), they are centrally located and safer than walking or riding on Summit Road. At the very least they offer good exercise outside.

**Summit Road to Summit Store.** The trail east to Loma Prieta Avenue takes you past Timmus Lane (Summit spelled backward). It also passes Morrill Road, a lightly traveled one-mile loop through deep forest behind the Loma Prieta Playfield. (This loop offers a great shady detour, especially in summer. It ends back on Summit Road.)



but the views are worth a drive up Loma Prieta Way.

The Summit trail passes Loma Prieta Avenue and on to Summit Store, a good place to rest in the shaded patio while enjoying snacks and drinks.



Note that on the Santa Cruz side of the road, Morrill becomes Morrell. (Santa Cruz is right. H.C. Morrell bought his home on the Summit in 1867. His wife was Clarissa Burrell, daughter of Lyman Burrell, a pioneer often recognized as the first permanent resident of the Summit area.)

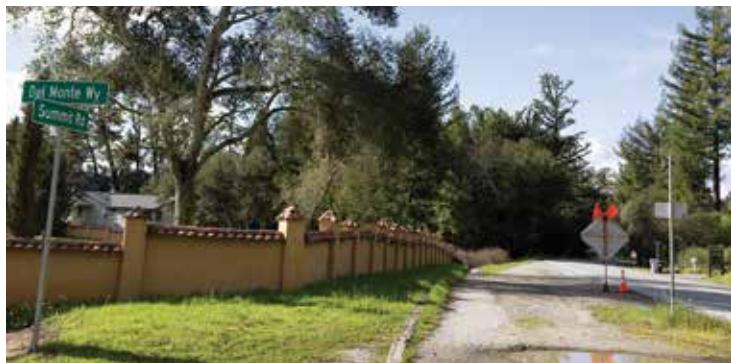
The Summit Trail continues past our local schools and a big Christmas tree farm. The farm is private property, but hikers and dog walkers enjoy the views toward the ocean, rows of Christmas trees, and open space. (To protect public use, be sure to clean up after your dog.)

Across Summit from the schools, the big grassy area of the Loma Prieta Playfield is a public place to walk. As a bonus, you can find shade and a short loop trail through the redwoods behind the field.

Continuing along Summit, you'll pass Mountain Bible Church and Pippa's home and gardens, the site of many wonderful folk-music concerts.

As we pass by the schools, the trail widens near the Burrell School and Regale wineries. Looking north, we see the mountain ridges of Sierra Azul Open Space, including Mt. El Sombroso (2999 feet), Mt. Thayer (3483 feet), and Mt. Umunhum (3486 feet). These mountains may become more accessible when they can be entered from our side of the mountains.

Looking to the east reveals the mountain Loma Prieta. The towers at the peak are inaccessible and the road is rough,



**Summit Road to Old Summit Road.** The Santa Cruz version of the Summit Trail begins as a wide path at the northern edge of Villa del Monte. You cross Sunset Drive across the road from Summit Veterinary Hospital, then walk by two churches. The first section from Villa del Monte to Old Santa Cruz Highway is too close to the road and often disappears, but the views are interesting, including a little free library, a seasonal duck pond, and flocks of birds in a large green grass field.

Further west, you continue past Trail Ridge, the road to the beautiful gardens of *Maison du Lac*. If you are hungry, stop by the Mason-Taylor Ranch, home of fresh mountain produce.

The next section from Old Santa Cruz Highway to Old Summit Road is in better condition and easy to follow. Some of the road is paved. Other sections are packed dirt,

When you reach Old Summit Road, you can follow it all the way to Highway 17.



**Trail history.** According to Marlene Wiley's Summit Pathway story in the May 1997 issue in *MNN*, "Ed Lopez and Dick Stebbins graded the path east from Villa del Monte to Loma Prieta Avenue in 1969. Santa Clara County did the oiling. In the early 1970s, the Patchen 4-H Club cleared a path from near the old Pheasant Farm on Old Summit Road eastward almost to Old Santa Cruz Highway."

In early 1992, Mike Hart, a member of the Loma Prieta Community Foundation and an enthusiastic community builder, began a campaign to construct an all-weather, multi-purpose trail. His drive, combined with the support of Santa Cruz County Supervisor Jan Beatz, resulted in the dedication of the Summit Pathway on October 18, 1997.

As reported in the November 1997 issue of *MNN*, "Speakers included Teall Messer, acting planning commissioner, Santa Cruz County, Leslie Meehan, president of the Loma Prieta Community Foundation, Scott Salsbury; Loma Prieta school board member, and Mike Hart; the community activist who successfully campaigned for the new trail. Neil Wiley served as the master of ceremonies and provided the appropriate food for the occasion—trail mix. Everyone thanked Mike Hart for his persistence, Supervisor Jan Beatz for her support, and Santa Cruz County for funding."

Unfortunately, Mike Hart left our area to run several railroads. Although these trails still serve our community, both could be improved. Hopefully, someone with the enthusiasm and drive of Mike Hart will further improve the trails along the main road in the Summit area. Our community could enjoy better multi-use trails.

**The Villa del Monte Loop.** If you want more exercise in a short distance, try walking



the Villa del Monte loop. It has some ups and downs, but you are walking on pavement. Over the years, I've walked the loop with packs of dogs, including some belonging to my neighbors. Now, dogs are on leash, which is less free but safer.

We had horses. Many years ago, 17 horses were stabled in the Villa. No horses are here now. (We have fewer riders and fewer flies.) Instead, we have more cars driven faster. Although walkers (and drivers) need to be more careful, it's still a good experience to walk in a mountain neighborhood, meet neighbors, and enjoy the outdoors.

To reach the Villa Loop from Highway 17, follow Summit Road east from Highway 17. After passing churches on both sides of Summit, watch for the Summit Vet building across from the first of two Villa entrances. (There is parking available at the vet.)

Turn right at the white gates on Sunset Drive, then right on Evergreen Drive, and left on Skyview Terrace. You are on "the loop."



You pass the water tank and continue downhill around a long curving road. You pass BelAire Court and follow downhill around two curves to reach the bottom of the loop, then continue on Skyview Terrace.

You might want to make a few rest stops on the way, perhaps one at the very lowest point where you can find a curb for sitting, and sometimes hear some waterfalls,

After a rest, you walk up the hill around a few curves. After passing Skyview Court on the right, you take the next right on Cove Lane. After a short distance, you pass the road to the left and continue uphill. On the right, you can see the original Villa del Monte estate. When you reach Evergreen, turn left and continue past the loop starting point on Skyview Terrace. When you reach the cross street of Sunset, you can turn



left to reach the neighborhood's west entrance or turn right to the east entrance. You have walked two or three miles.

**Ask a neighbor.** There are many other roads and trails you can walk in our mountains. Ask a local from Redwood Estates, Skyland, Hutchinson Road, Aldercroft Heights, Old Santa Cruz Highway, Redwood Lodge, Schulties Road, or other mountain neighborhood. You may discover a special place to explore outside. If you do, perhaps you can share your experience with us.

Enjoy!



## The Historical Schultheis Family

Debra Staab

John Martin Schultheis (pronounced shool-tize) and his wife Susan Byerly Schultheis were major contributors to the early development of pioneer life in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The couple arrived at the Summit in 1852 in an oxen-drawn wagon loaded with all of their personal belongings. The trip up the hill from Los Gatos took three days of pushing through brush and chaparral. There were no roads at the time, only old Indian and Spanish trails.

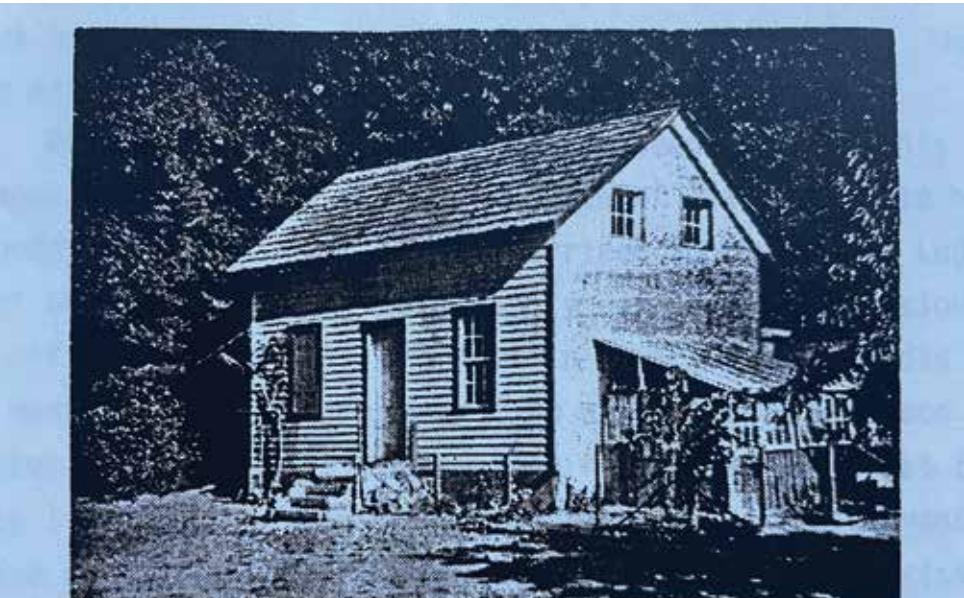
John was born in Bavaria in 1826, where he became a skilled cabinet-maker and farmer. He immigrated to the United States and initially settled in Ohio. There, he met and married Susan Byerly, also from Bavaria. John and Susan joined a cross-country wagon train in early 1852 and headed for the West Coast.

The couple had planned to claim property in Santa Clara Valley, but learned that much of the land had already been staked and the rest seemed to be under dispute. Instead, they headed into Santa Cruz Mountains and grabbed a large plot of flat land by a lagoon near the intersection of what we now call the Old Santa Cruz Highway and Summit Road. Here, they would plant orchards and make a life among the redwoods.

At the time, there were very few other people living at the Summit. The Native American locals passed through the area as they traveled between the mountains and the coast, but did not make permanent settlements here. The Schultheis' only neighbor was Charles McKiernan, an immigrant from Ireland. Mountain Charley built his first cabin about two miles up the road from them, having arrived a year earlier in 1851. Travelers passed over the summit on their way from San Jose to Santa Cruz. Both towns were established much earlier during Spanish rule, the former in 1777 and the latter in 1791. Los Gatos was little more than a crossroads by Forbes Flour Mill until the late 1860s.

John was a builder, and he soon constructed a sturdy log cabin. It was held together with mortar made from lime mined near Felton. The original cabin, now covered with siding, is still in use and is believed to be the oldest structure in the area. The family cleared their land and planted orchards, vineyards, and grains.

The couple had four children: Martin,



Martin and Susan Schultheis' home on the Summit.

Edward, Frank, and Alice.

**Helping the Community.** Susan Schultheis was a nurse and midwife who trekked up and down the mountain to tend to people's ailments and assist with births. She traveled alone in all types of weather as far as Boulder Creek. When a stageline started running past the Schultheis home, Susan fed the passengers biscuits, toast, and coffee while her husband tended to their horses.

John and Susan both helped nurse Mountain Charley back to health after his grizzly-bear attack. (See article on facing page.)

One story about Susan shows her bravery in the face of danger. She was home alone when three rough, heavily armed villains came to the door demanding food. Susan calmly served them, and they soon galloped away. She later found out that the men were escaped prisoners from Australia and that they were being hunted by a local posse. The posse soon caught up with the men who were unceremoniously executed on the spot, their bodies left unburied.

Between the Schultheis' arrival and the 1880s, many other pioneers

staked claims on the Summit including the Burrells, the Wrights, the Meyers, and the Chases. John's orchards had matured and were producing a lot of apples, pears, and other fruit. His example led many others to cultivate fruit and grapes, and it became a lucrative industry for the community.

In 1880, the railroad began operating, with stops at Wrights and Laurel. John constructed a 3.5-mile-long dirt road from his property to Laurel for the purpose of shipping his fruit to market.

### Alice Schultheis Marries Volney Averill.

John and Susan's daughter, Alice, married Volney Averill in 1873 and took over the land on the north side of the homestead. They moved the original cabin to the back of the lot and built a large Georgian-Victorian



Alice and Volney Averill's Georgian-Victorian home

home near the front of the property in 1895. The couple eventually had seven children.

This parcel was sold to the Taylors, then the Masons. It is today known as the Mason-Taylor Ranch. The large home was destroyed during the 1989 earthquake. The Loma Prieta Museum holds their annual Family History Day and barbecue in the same redwood grove where Averills were married.

**The Summit Opera House.** In 1885, the Schultheis donated land to the Patchen Social Club to build a recreation center. Volney Averill was a founding member. The large 40-by-75-foot building was named the Summit Opera House. The hall hosted plays, dances, operas, and other social gatherings. Two of the Schultheis boys were musicians who often performed there. The builders of the Summit Opera House included a special feature. They placed heavy wagon overload springs under the dance floor joists so the entire floor responded to the rhythm of the dancers. Locals became regular attendees, and people came from as far away as Santa Clara Valley and Soquel.

John Schultheis died in 1896 at the age of 74, and Susan passed in 1907 at age 78. Both are buried at the Santa Clara Mission Cemetery in Santa Clara.

**A Schultheis Anniversary.** Gerry Park is a direct descendant of the pioneering family. In 2023, he hosted a 150-year anniversary celebration for Alice and Volney at the Mason-Taylor Ranch. Several family members and a few local historians came to pay their respects. Gerry shared old photos, coins, jewelry, and stories about his heritage. He showed an historic octagon-barrel muzzleloader rifle that was used to shoot grizzly bears. He also brought out a silver chalice that was given to Alice and Volney by their daughter Bessie and her husband Billie Romes on their 50th wedding anniversary. The chalice is a family heirloom.

History paints a clear picture of John and Susan Schultheis. They were adventurous, industrious, caring, and productive members of our community. They leave behind a legacy on the Mason-Taylor Ranch and a road that bears their name.



## The Schultheis Assist

### Mountain Charley

Debra Staab

A dramatic fight between Mountain Charley and a large grizzly bear occurred on May 8, 1854. Both John and Susan Schultheis took care of Charley after the attack, and later gave an account of the brutal incident to the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*.

It seems that Charley and a friend named Taylor went hunting and had killed a couple of deer. Suddenly, Charley spotted a massive grizzly bear eating wild oats across a hollow, and he set about to shoot and kill it. They packed powder into their muzzle-loading rifles (which could only fire a single shot at a time) and made ready to hunt. Before the two men could get in position to fire a shot, the bear charged at them. It probably smelled blood on their hands from the deer. Both men then fired their rifles, but the grizzly kept coming.

McKiernan smashed his rifle into the bear's ribs, which bent the barrel and rendered the gun useless. The bear got angry, rose up on its hind legs, wrapped its front paws around Charley's head, and bit down. One of the bear's teeth caught Charley's right eye, and the other tooth pierced his left temple. When Charley raised his arm, the bear bit that too. Then, it charged at Taylor. Taylor ran for his life and fell into the wild oats, which hid him from the predator. Finally, the bear leapt over McKiernan and ran growling into the woods. Taylor ran for help.

John Schultheis, Taylor, and a few others went back for Charley. They wrapped him in a blanket, put him on a mule, and got him home in one piece just before sunset. John bravely agreed to ride into San Jose to get a doctor.

The moon was shining brightly as he borrowed a horse and promptly set out on the narrow steep brushy trail to town. He arrived at midnight, having made the journey in just three hours. John collected Dr. Bell and they returned to Charley's place by sunrise the next day. Susan had stayed up all night tending to Charley.

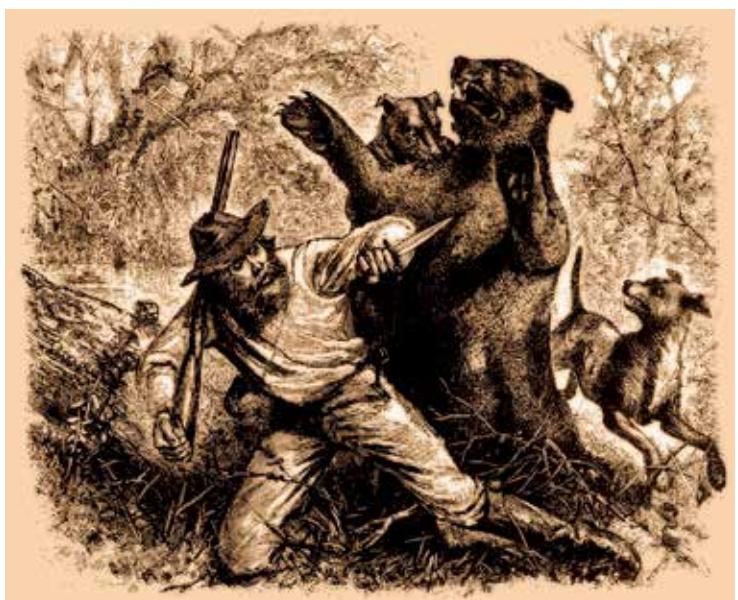
When Dr. Bell removed the dressing to examine the wound, a chunk of Charley's skull stuck to the bandage and they could see his bare brain pulsing. The doctor prescribed a metal plate to cover the gash in Charley's head. It was made from a silver peso and arrived the next morning. Unfortunately, it was too small and a second silver plate had to be made. The next day, Dr. Ingersoll came up the hill to perform the operation using only chloroform as a pain killer. They say that Charley barely flinched.

For the next few months, Susan nursed Charley while John tended to the garden and livestock. Charley's eyesight returned in a month, but the wound refused to heal. By chance, a doctor from Santa Cruz stopped at Charley's for supper on his way to San Francisco. He took one look at the injury and announced that the plate had to be removed immediately, which he proceeded to do. Finally, the gash healed and Charley recovered.

The Schultheis refused to leave him alone until he could handle his own affairs. During this period they also had to care for their own homestead, two miles away.

Charley got back on his feet, but suffered from painful headaches over the next few years. His doctors became quite concerned, and on their recommendation, he allowed them to reopen the old wound. They discovered and removed a wad of hair which had been caught inside Charley's head. After surgery, his pain diminished, and even with a disfigured face, he lived a relatively normal life.

Charley later married, moved to San Jose, and had seven children. He died in 1892 at the age of 66, some 38 years after the bear attack.



## Lion's Mane Nudibranchs

Bruce Sudweeks

Recently there has been an explosion of lion's mane nudibranchs at what is called Middle Reef, just off of San Carlos Beach in Monterey. These creatures are also called hooded nudibranchs and have some interesting behaviors.

Unlike most nudibranchs, these sea slugs can swim. They can repel potential predators by producing noxious smells from their repugnatorial glands. The offensive odors have a watermelon-like scent.



## **Grebes** **Mercury Freedom**

Every year from around November through February, Western and Clark's Grebes migrate to Calero Reservoir in southern Santa Clara County to breed. The species are very similar, and both are well-known for their rushing/courting ceremony.

When rushing, the grebes are essentially walking on water. It is a high-speed sprint where two (or sometimes more) grebes lunge forward, rise completely out of the water, and run side-by-side across the surface for up to 20 yards. They cover that distance in about seven seconds by slapping the water up to 20 times per second. Their feet have lobed toes that splay out to maximize surface area.

Why do they do this? The primary reason is for mate selection and pair-bonding. It is a fitness test that serves several purposes.

The rushing dance is incredibly taxing. By successfully performing the sprint, a grebe demonstrates to its potential partner that it is strong and healthy. It also requires perfect synchronization. If a pair can't stay in step, perhaps they aren't a good match.

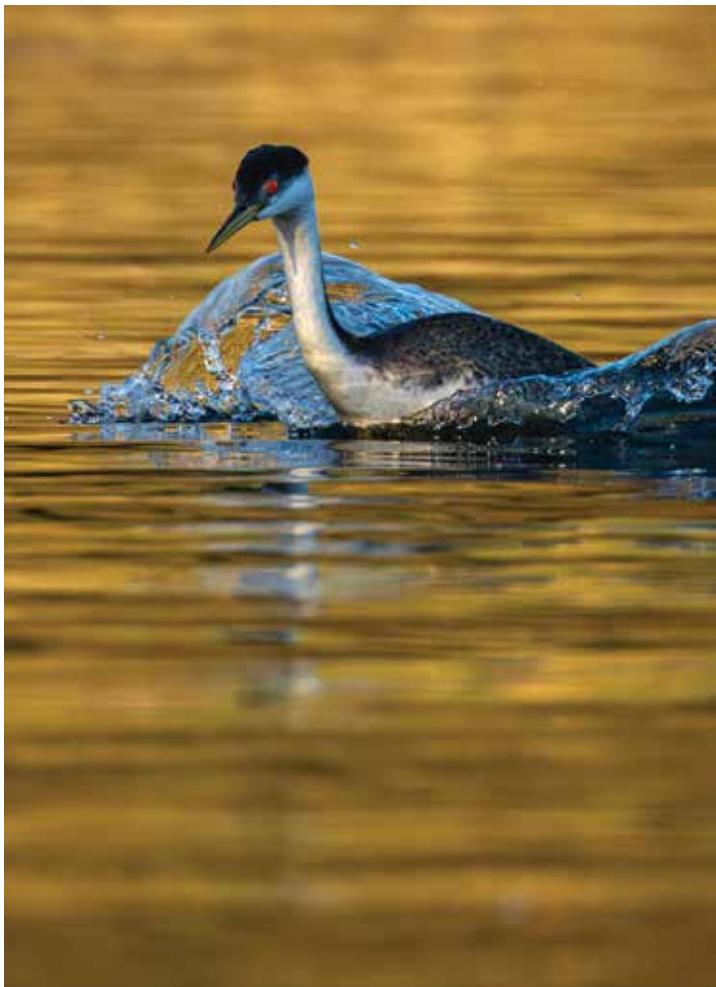
In Northern California, in addition to Calero Reservoir, grebes gather in Clear Lake, Eagle Lake, and Lake Almanor.



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# **schools**

## **Lakeside School News**

Steve Burrell

There is something special about returning to an elementary school campus in January. The air feels fresh, the classrooms feel energized, and our students arrive with a mix of excitement and curiosity about what the second half of the school year will bring. The start of a new year gives us a natural moment to reflect, reset, and look forward to all the learning and growth still ahead.

In mid-January, we held parent-teacher conferences. These conversations are an important part of our partnership with families, when we celebrate student strengths, share progress, and set simple, meaningful goals for the months ahead. These conferences allow teachers and families to connect in a personal way and work together to support each child.

Our students are taking on new responsibilities, diving deeper into projects, and building on the foundation they have worked hard to develop. Our goal is to help them grow while we keep learning joyful and engaging.

Enrollment for TK and kindergarten for the 2026–27 school year is now open. Families interested in learning more about

our small, inclusive elementary school community can visit [lakesidelosgatos.org](http://lakesidelosgatos.org), or email [cforbord@lakesidelosgatos.org](mailto:cforbord@lakesidelosgatos.org). We look forward to welcoming new students and families to Lakeside.

*Photos by Elizabeth Greer*



### **Lakeside School Auction**

Mark your calendar for the “Lakeside in Wonderland” auction on **Saturday, March 28**, at the Lakeside School Community Center, 19621 Black Road, from 6 to 9 p.m. Tickets include sit-down dinner and open bar. Tickets are \$80 through February 28, \$100 after that. A silent online auction will be held 24–28. More information is at [www.lakesidescf.org](http://www.lakesidescf.org).



*First-graders making cloud models in science class.*

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### Your Impact

## KEEP! Programs at Work

### Loma Public Education Fund Board

Art teacher Helen O'Dea recently challenged her C.T. English students to reimagine an aging mural behind the gym. Students designed a new vision, projected their digital image onto the wall, and brought it to life with paint.

The project taught valuable lessons in design, symbolism, collaboration, and production. It also created a stunning piece of art the school will enjoy for years to come. "We wore trash bags a lot of the time," joked C.T. English eighth-grader Peter Ematrudo. Next time you're on campus, see if you can find the banana slug.

The cats from the original mural remain, symbolizing students' progression from Loma Prieta Elementary to C.T. English Middle School. The largest cat stands on the cusp of venturing into the world, glancing back at the special, nurturing space that shaped its early life.

Each winter, LPEF works with the school board to identify fundraising priorities for the KEEP (Keep Excellent Education Programs) campaign. As a small district without the economies-of-scale or tax base of larger districts, we face a gap between government funding and what it costs to provide the education our students deserve.\*

Last spring's KEEP campaign helped fund three programs for the 2025-26 school year: Kindergarten through eighth-grade art instruction, TK through fifth-grade developmental physical education, and an additional teacher at Loma Prieta Elementary School to maintain small class sizes.

Initially, the KEEP campaign did not raise enough money to fully fund an additional teacher at Loma. However, the district received new enrollments over the summer



that tipped the scale to justify hiring another teacher.

Mr. Hoefer says of his third-grade class, "Instead of *quantity* of writing, I have been able to focus on the

*quality and purpose* of their writing. It's been a gift to be able to listen to each student read and recognize strengths and areas of growth or intervention." Coach Patiño says smaller physical education classes have "enhanced safety, engagement, and overall quality of instruction."

To Coach Patiño, P.E. is not only about developing the physical skills to enjoy



movement. It also prepares students for life by practicing decision-making and problem-solving. "Real confidence comes from trying hard things, experiencing failure, and then succeeding and knowing what you're capable of," he says.

While a larger portion of our funding supports the elementary school this year, the LPEF gala raised \$11,000 to improve the recess facilities at C.T. English. There is growing interest in expanding elective choices at the middle school. This is an exciting potential opportunity for future fundraising.

It's been a fantastic year so far, and we're thankful for our community's continued support. We always welcome your thoughts at [president@lpef.org](mailto:president@lpef.org).

Join us for 95033 Community Night at the Santa Cruz Warriors on **Sunday, March 8**. Tickets are on sale at [LPEF.org](http://LPEF.org).



\* For details on the Measure M parcel tax, see the blog post "How KEEP Funding Decisions Really Happen" at [LPEF.org](http://LPEF.org).

# Schools

## Lexington School News

Jason Deppong

At the annual Lexington talent show, 20 second- through fifth-graders performed for students and families. They sang, danced, played piano, performed circus acts and magic tricks, demonstrated karate and archery, and solved a Rubik's cube. For a small school, Lexington has a lot of talent.



The home and school club organized a spirit week and an end-of-school winter send-off party for all students before the winter break. Activities included a crazy-hair day and different dress-up days. On the last day, a snow machine created a wintery scene as students prepared to leave for vacation. Parents dressed up as winter characters, including Lexington's wildcat mascot Lexi, and handed out holiday goodies to parents and students.

Parent Chris Whitall and alumnus William joined me, Ms. Kajsa, and Ms. Katie in an impromptu Lexington band. We performed holiday songs in front of the school. It was a great way to wrap up the first half of the school year.

The new year started with a review of school agreements. Fifth-graders led students around campus to discuss "The Lex Way," which describes our school's expectations for behavior. They used scripts to guide



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discussions with younger students at each location around campus. For example, students practiced entering the office and politely greeting staff before making a request.

One Community Los Gatos (OCLG) organized an entertaining game of basketball between The Harlem Wizards and a team of LGUSD staff members at Fisher Middle School. Mr. Jo, Ms. Hampshire, and Ms. Crowley represented Lexington. The Wizards are known for their excellent skills and hilarious antics on the court. This sold-out event raised funds for several LGUSD programs and staff. It was a fun community-building evening out for families.

The annual Lexington play is underway. Mrs. Lougée, Lexington's former librarian, has teamed up with Theater in the Mountains to keep this annual performance happening. Auditions took place in January. This year's production is titled *The Not-So-Nasty Tales of the Sisters Grimm*. Public performances will be on **Wednesday and Thursday, March 11 and 12**.

In early February, Lexington will complete its International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program re-authorization evaluation. Staff reflected on school practices since last spring. We have gathered input from parents, students, district administration, and board members. A team will virtually visit Lexington in early February to learn more about the program and share their observations.

Next year, transitional kindergarten (TK) will be open to any student who turns four by September 1, 2026. There will be at least one TK class at each school in the LGUSD for the 2025-26 school year. Registration is from **Monday, February 2 through Friday, February 27**. Depending on interest, a lottery may determine site placement. Downtown schools will offer a traditional TK program. Lexington will continue to provide an International Baccalaureate Early Years program with a multilingual focus and a small-school, play-based setting.



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Photos by Jason Deppong and Jill Mayo

February 2026

Celebrating life in the Santa Cruz Mountains

page 27

# schools

## Building Blocks Preschool

Jessie Thorsen

Building Blocks Cooperative Preschool continues to adapt our preschool program to the needs of our families. The 2026-2027 enrollment season opens on **February 10**. We have restructured enrollment packages to reflect the changes we have implemented over the last several years.

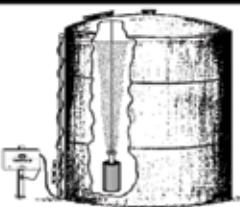
**Extended-day program.** We now offer many different levels of commitment, extended hours, and flexible options for families. Beginning in September 2026, we will offer an extended-day program. It offers our preschool program from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. for families that need it. Space is limited, so enroll early!

**Enrollment.** We offer rolling enrollment year-round for two- to five-year-olds. If your child turns two after the start of the school year in September, you may enroll your child when they turn two. Enrollment is first-come, first-served and based on availability. Potty training is not a prerequisite for enrollment. We offer a waitlist if classes are full and we offer partial scholarships based on financial need and available scholarship funds.

**Our program.** Building Blocks has taken great steps to align with the *California Preschool Learning Foundations*, a comprehensive framework established by the California Department of Education to guide early-childhood education. Our program incorporates child-led play along with purposeful activities designed and guided by teachers.



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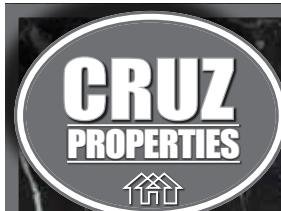
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