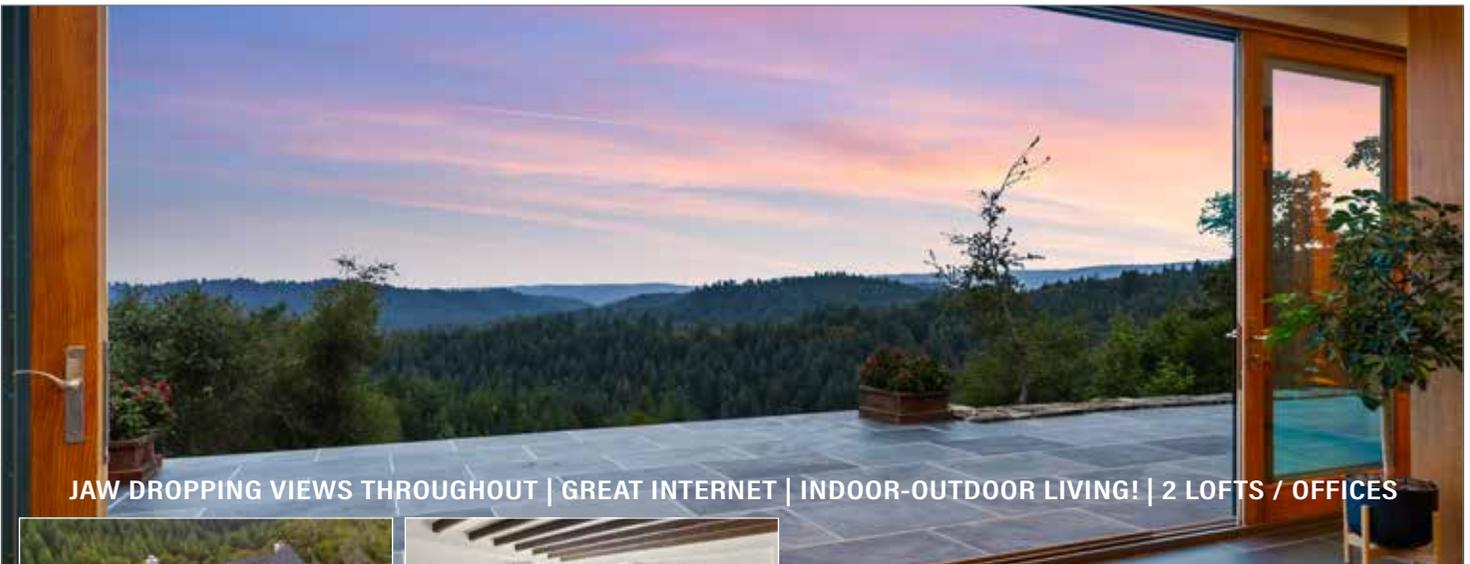


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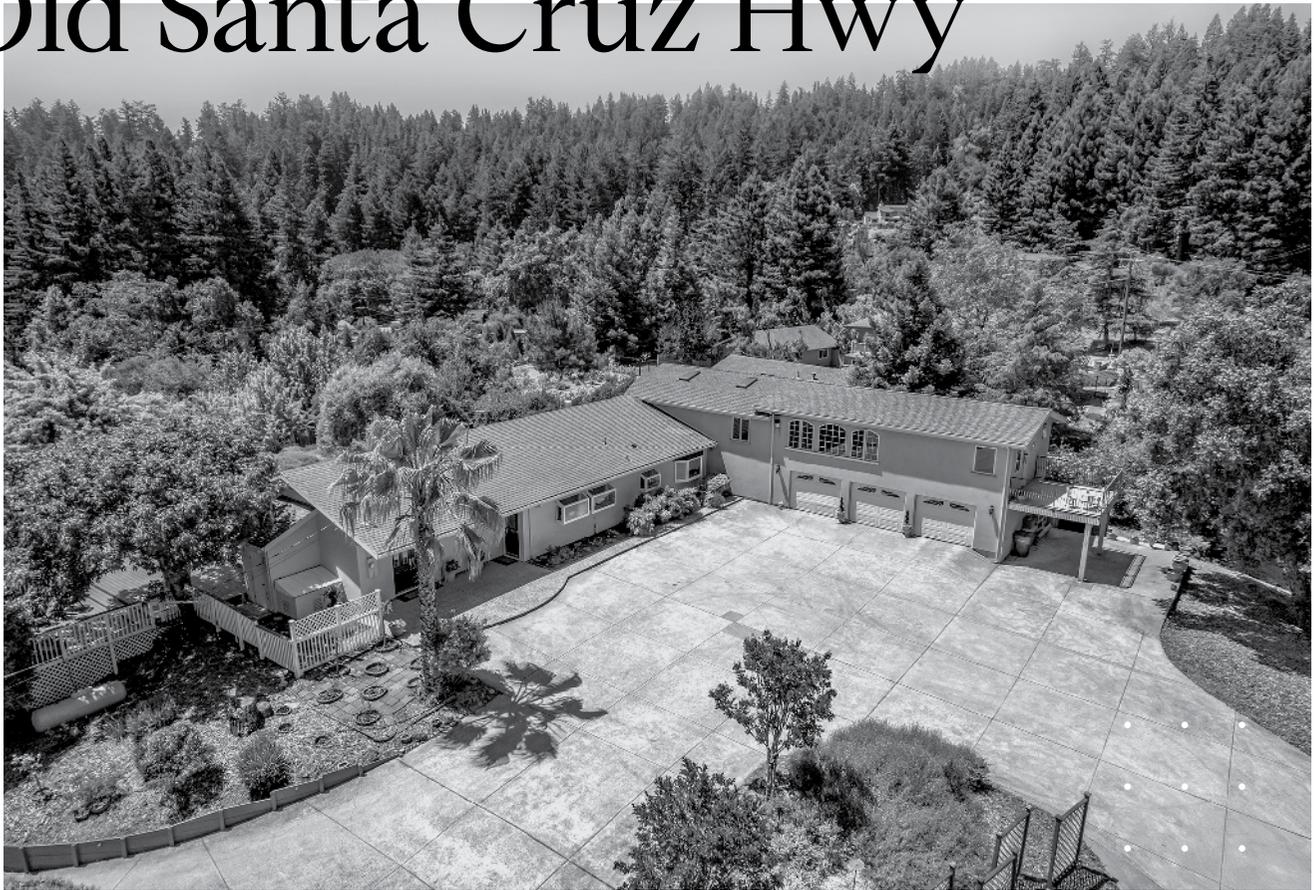
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Elegant home close to town on a sunny acre with views and garage space for 5 cars! This home is a haven of light and style. Formal entry, high ceilings, abundant windows and views, complete with new carpets. Gourmet chef's kitchen, formal dining room, pantry, and laundry area. Two primary bedrooms, one is a private retreat with gas fireplace, enormous walk-in closet, and a luxurious bathroom with a sunken tub and a stunning shower, that leads to a private deck. Attached 3-car garage, carport, detached 2-car garage with barn/workshop, and a vast cement parking area and driveway. Lovely gardens and entertainment areas. Easy drive to town or beach. Los Gatos Schools (Loma Prieta, CT & LG High).

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COMPASS

**The March issue of
Mountain Network News
Volume MMXXVI number 3**
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Articles

We invite individuals and organizations to submit letters and articles. Email kathy@paralleldesign.com. For information, call 408-529-1431. We reserve the right to edit submissions. We assume no responsibility for errors, omissions, or authors' opinions. Deadline: 10th of the preceding month.

Advertising

Closing date: 10th of the preceding month. We assume no responsibility for advertisers' submissions.

2026 Ad Rates

Business card, vertical (3 3/4" high by 2 1/2" wide)	\$165
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Two-thirds page (6 1/4" high by 7 1/2" wide)	616
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Four-color page or 2/3 page	add \$500
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More than 4000 homes and businesses
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**Our Cover
Photo by Faizi Samadani**

The hummingbird played a significant spiritual role in the lives of the native Ohlone people in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Mount Umunhum, one of the highest mountain peaks in the Santa Cruz Mountains, derives its name from the Ohlone word for hummingbird.

It translates as, "the resting place of the hummingbird."

Local photographer Faizi Samadani recently discovered a hummingbird nest on his property.

He was able to document from afar as the mother built up her nest.

Hummingbirds are essential pollinators for many flowering plants and help control pest populations.

A thriving hummingbird population indicates a healthy environment with sufficient resources.

See a close-up photo of the nest on page 23.

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events

Pizzeria Vittoria Anniversary Celebration Mike Lerman

We thank the community for their support, and are thrilled to celebrate our one-year anniversary with several special events throughout the month of March.

Pick up an anniversary coloring sheet for our children's coloring contest. We will decorate the restaurant with all the entries. One lucky artist will win a birthday pizza-making party for six.

Beginning in April, we will introduce a new menu. We will tally up the sandwiches and pizzas ordered in the month of March. The greatest hits from the classic Nonno's menu (top three sandwiches and top five pizzas) will make it to the new menu.

Loyalty Raffle. If you are a member of our loyalty program, you'll receive one raffle ticket for every order placed in March. We'll draw the winning ticket on April 1. The winner will receive a free large pizza, every month, for the next 12 months. Sign-up is free and can be done in store or online.

Throughout the month of March, join us on Tuesdays for a free slice of birthday cake, while it lasts. On Wednesdays, BYOB: Bring Your Own Blanket...and a bottle. Enjoy live music, no corkage fees, and wine tastings with local wineries. On Saturdays, we will feature live music on the patio, weather permitting.

Ciao from Pizzeria Vittoria!



Loma Prieta Museum The Lost Town of Loma Prieta History Presentation and Tour Roger Mason

Perhaps you have hiked or ridden a mountain bike in the beautiful Nisene Marks State Park. Now you can learn about the lost town of Loma Prieta. Mark your calendars for an interesting and educational presentation about the history of the park on **Thursday, May 7**, from 7 to 9 p.m., at the Loma Prieta School Forum. This is a free community Loma Prieta Museum History event.

We will host a guided tour of the park and the site of the Lost Town of Loma Prieta on **Saturday, May 9**, from 9 a.m. to noon. On the tour we will identify other interesting sites, including the epicenter of the 1989 earthquake. We will meet at the park entrance in Aptos. Check our website for more details.

The park's name honors Nisene Marks, the nature-loving mother of the Salinas farm family that bought the land in the 1950s. Her children donated approximately 9,700 acres to the state in 1963 with the provision that the land never be developed. Today, the park showcases a forest in recovery, with rugged canyons and remnants of its once-bustling railroad and logging industry.

A new printing of *A Howling Wilderness*, a local history book about the early settlers of the Summit area by Dr. Stephen Payne, is now available for a donation of \$25. You can also pick up a copy of *Harvest of Change*, Dr. Payne's book about the history of Santa Clara County, for a \$35 donation.



If you would like to receive these books, email us at LomaPrietaMuseum@gmail.com or call 408-529-0254. We also welcome volunteers and tax-deductible donations. For more information, visit us at www.LomaPrietaMuseum.org. You can also mail a check to "LPCF" with a memo "For LPM," and mail to Loma Prieta Museum, 22951 Summit Road, Los Gatos, CA 95033.

95033free Swap Meet Miriam Watson

Join us for the next 95033free swap meet—the giant garage sale where everything is free—on **Saturday, April 4**, from 9 a.m. to noon, in the Loma Prieta Gymnasium, 23800 Summit Road.

Bring along clean, usable items in good working condition—anything from a single item to a truckload—to share with neighbors. Skip anything that's better suited for the landfill. If it's not something you'd give a friend, it probably doesn't belong at the swap.

You don't need to stay with your items, but please return at noon to pick up anything that wasn't claimed.

If you don't have anything to contribute, \$5 donation allows you to take what you need for personal use. Collecting items for resale is not allowed from 9 to 10:30 a.m.

For more information, email Leslie O'Malley at h2ominded@gmail.com or Miriam Watson at ilovethemountains@gmail.com.




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PIZZERIA VITTORIA TURNS 1

Thank you Mountain Community for helping us reach this milestone. Join us in March for live music, raffles, coloring contest, beer & wine specials and a chance to help us plan our new menu for April.




events

Mountain Vines, Elevated Wines The Santa Cruz Mountains Grand Wine Tasting Brittany Archer

On **Sunday, March 29**, wine lovers will have the opportunity to explore the exceptional wines of the Santa Cruz Mountains at the tenth-annual Wines of the Santa Cruz Mountains Grand Wine Tasting. This event will be from noon to 4 p.m. at the historic Mountain Winery in Saratoga.

High above Silicon Valley, with sweeping valley views, the Mountain Winery hosts more than 50 acclaimed vintners. They will pour over 150 premium wines, offering guests an immersive tasting that captures the diversity, character, and sense of place that define the Santa Cruz Mountains wine region.

From elegant pinot noir and structured cabernet sauvignon, to vibrant chardonnay and cool-climate syrah, the region's wines reflect the dramatic terrain and maritime influence that shape them. Steep vineyard sites, rocky soils, persistent coastal fog, and a culture of thoughtful, restrained winemaking all contribute to wines known for their balance, minerality, and age-worthiness.



In addition to wine tasting, this year's event features an educational seminar, *Chardonnay: A Santa Cruz Mountains Signature*, moderated by wine writer Alder Yarrow of *Vinography*. The discussion will spotlight why Santa Cruz Mountains chardonnay stands among California's most expressive styles. Panelists include Sarah Green (Neely Wines), Ryan Beauregard (Beauregard Vineyards), Lauren Lyall (Ridge Vineyards), and Jeff Brinkman (Rhys Vineyards). They will explore how site and climate shape this hallmark wine.

Guests can participate in a silent auction showcasing VIP tours and tastings, large-format wines, and rare and collectible Santa Cruz Mountains wines. It's the perfect

opportunity to secure limited releases and special bottlings.

Ticket options range from general admission to elevated VIP experiences. VIP guests enjoy prime parking, early access, and a dedicated VIP tasting. It will feature caviar by The Caviar Co., Santa Cruz Mountains chardonnay, sparkling wines, and artisanal cheeses and charcuterie by Oak & Rye. Food will also be available for purchase at the Mountain Winery concessions bar. All guests will receive a commemorative wine glass and new favorites.

The SCM Grand Wine Tasting is the consummate wine event of the season. For tickets and additional information, visit winesofscm.com/gt2026.

WINES OF THE
SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS

SUNDAY MARCH 29, 2026

THE MOUNTAIN WINERY, SARATOGA, CA

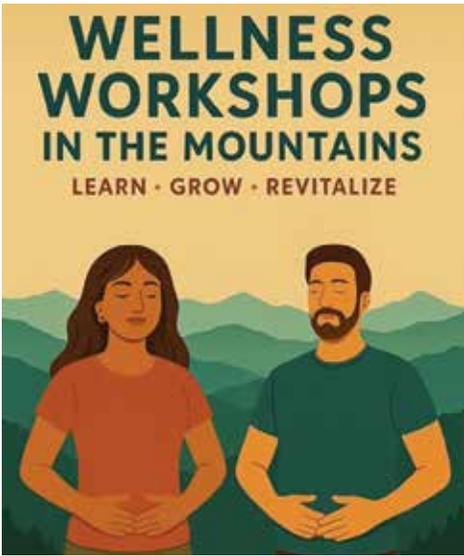
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FEATURING PREMIER SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS WINES

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WINESOFSCM.COM/GT2026

DISCOUNT • DISCOUNT

The Mountain Network News readers can enjoy an exclusive 10% discount on Grand Tasting tickets with code **GTMNN10**



Skyland Church
The Best of Times,
the Worst of Times

Skyland Church welcomes the community to a free workshop about the psychology and neuroscience of goal-setting, on **Saturday March 7**, from 9:30 a.m. to noon, in Whitaker Hall. The session will begin with movement led by Jaime Domond from Cups of Yoga, followed by a presentation by Dr. Dennis Evans. After the workshop, enjoy conversation with your neighbors and a complementary lunch.

Based on research, Evans will explain how anxiety and stress can lead to procrastination, avoidance, and stalled progress. He will also address how we can shift these patterns. How do we change our behavior when pressure is high? What helps us become more flexible problem-solvers? Learn about practical, research-backed strategies and skills that support better time-management, clearer decision-making, and more effective action.

Reserve a spot at this informational workshop at SkylandChurch.com/way-to-wellness-2026, or the Skyland Church Facebook Page. For more information, call 408-353-1310.

Defensible Space
Free Chipping Programs
Kathy McKinney

With fire season fast approaching, it's time to clean up winter's fallen branches and improve the defensible space around your property. It's not just a smart idea, it's state law (Public Service Code 4291).

Both Santa Clara and Santa Cruz have free chipping programs for residents in the wildland-urban interface. These programs are designed to encourage and support homeowners in creating and maintaining the required defensible space around their homes. Required defensible space clearing is 0-100 feet (Zones 0-2) from permanent structures. The goal is to reduce fuel loads and to prevent and mitigate future wildfires.

Both programs have limited availability and registrations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, so it's important to register early.

Registration for the Santa Clara County Firesafe Council's spring chipping program opens on **Monday, March 2**. They offer both at-home chipping and drive-up chipping events. For at-home chipping, prepare your piles of brush.

For drive-up chipping events, bring brush in your own vehicle to the site for chipping. To register, visit sccfiresafe.org/forms/.

In Santa Cruz County, registration for the Resource Conservation District's spring chipping program opens on **Wednesday, April 1**, and runs through **April 30**. If you live in a Firewise neighborhood, you can register early, beginning on **Wednesday, March 25**. Chipping will begin in May.

You can prepare up to three piles for chipping, and woodchips will be left onsite. For more information and to register, visit www.rcdsantacruz.org/spring-chipping-information.

For residents of the South Skyline area, the South Skyline FireSafe Council sponsors a free chipping program in early summer. For more information, visit www.southskylinefiresafe.org, and select "free chipping program" under the "programs" menu.

For residents of the Central Summit Watershed Firewise community, the non-profit Summit Watershed Protection League sponsors multiple chipping days before and during wildfire season. For more information, visit sites.google.com/view/central-summit-firewise.



TASTING ROOM / PRIVATE EVENTS

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Get the word out.

Promote your local event in the Mountain Network News.

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

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 or call 408-529-1431.

Stepping In So the Music Doesn't Stop

Kathy McKinney

When the band room at Loma Prieta and C.T. English fell silent, it wasn't because students had lost interest.

After decades of teaching and playing music, district music teacher Casey Lelake was diagnosed with a hearing condition. While she can continue teaching music, her audiologist strongly advised her not to teach band. This was devastating to Casey and the more than 60 fourth- through eighth-grade students in the successful band program she had built up for years.

This could have meant the end of band at our small school district, but instead it became the beginning of a partnership led by C.T. English alumni Tobias Horton and Elijah Asheghian. Now juniors at Los Gatos High School, Tobias and Elijah were both members of the C.T. English band and have been involved in the LGHS band since their freshman year.

When they heard that the band program might disappear at Loma Prieta and C.T. English, they jumped into action.

"The idea that students at Loma and C.T. would not be able to get the band experience that would enable them to participate in band at the high school just didn't sit right," Tobias said.

Last summer, Tobias and Elijah worked with the school administration, parents, and Casey on a plan to continue band as an extra-curricular activity. "Ms. Lelake has been so helpful, guiding us in this process, providing us with music books, and sharing her experience," noted Elijah.

Every Sunday, a group of almost 20 musicians show up to learn and practice for an hour or two. One band is made up of fourth- and fifth-graders, the other is for the middle-school students. At the beginning



of the school year, some students arrived knowing how to play their instrument. Others were beginners. Their instruments include trumpet, flute, clarinet, trombone, bass clarinet, and percussion.

Attendance is very strong. Elijah noted that when they scheduled a rehearsal on the last Sunday before the end of winter break, he thought no one would show up. Almost everyone was there.

For the younger students, seeing high-school students take time out of their own busy schedules sends a powerful message: That they matter.

Tobias also said: "We wanted mountain kids to have someone older to connect with at the high school. It's nice to have those connections when you move down the hill."

Casey shared, "These boys jumped through so many hoops. They recruited students, worked with administration, gathered sponsorship from the Loma and C.T. English home and school clubs, inventoried instruments, wrote lesson plans all on their own time and initiative."

Tobias and Elijah weren't working alone. They recruited LGHS band members from town



to come up every Sunday to help. These young people, some of whom had never been in our Santa Cruz Mountains, have showed up and volunteered their time and talents to share their love of music with younger students.

In late January, the Loma band put on a community performance in the forum at Loma Prieta Elementary School. The room was filled with appreciative spectators and the bands sounded awesome. After the performance, a parent, whose son Lincoln is an eighth-grader in the band, told Elijah and Tobias, "You've done more for your community in just a few months than I did during both high school and college combined. Great job."

The boys agree that it isn't always easy. Planning rehearsals, managing behavior, and keeping students motivated takes work. But it's work they've come to value.

Tobias and Elijah's quiet commitment stands out. They didn't step in for recognition, credit, or to have something impressive on their college applications. They stepped in because a room full of students still wanted to play, and someone needed to count them in.



**Lago Lomita Vineyards
Amendments**

Robin Porter

The quality of the soil on our property is integral to the health of our grape vines. Amendments can improve the physical structure of the soil. By adding things like gypsum, compost, and peat moss, we increase aeration and drainage. This works in both clay and sandy soils. Amendments can help balance the chemistry of the soil by adjusting pH or sodium content. Microbes and organic matter help improve the biological health of the soil.

We do soil testing by collecting deep soil samples from various parts of the vineyard. We bag the samples and send them to a local laboratory. When the results come back, the lab makes recommendations. We also consult trusted vineyard consultants, like our local Prudy Foxx, who also advise us on what is needed.

In our case, we needed calcium, so we brought in 25 tons of ground oyster shells. Lucky for us, we live near the ocean! We're happy we didn't have to gather and grind up all those oyster shells ourselves. Next time you're at an oyster bar,

consider how their shells can positively impact the taste of your glass of wine.

Soil structure is greatly enhanced by compost. Last year, we got a grant to spread 50 tons of compost. As you can see in the photo, our dog Koda did most of the work.

Increasing organic matter helps the long-term fertility of our vines and helps with drought resistance. We also spray seaweed, a great source of potassium, on the leaves.

We've found that if you take care of the soil, the soil will take care of the vines.



Angelé Price

*From the Valley to the Sea
& the Mountains in between*

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community

Surfnet High-Speed Fiber Installation Process Ken Nye

Surfnet's fiber-internet footprint in the Santa Cruz Mountains continues to expand, bringing fast, local, and reliable internet service to residents and businesses in the area. For more than two years, our crews have worked steadily to establish an array of new fiber connections throughout the area. The installation journey is a meticulous one, involving design, permitting, installation, and careful consideration to bring fiber to each location. Here's our step-by-step process.

Laying the Foundation. Before Surfnet trucks can roll or any fiber wires are strung, a highly detailed design and permitting process is needed. We survey roads to determine the best strategy for fiber infrastructure, including how to efficiently and safely connect the most homes and businesses. This is particularly challenging in the Santa Cruz Mountains, where the terrain and weather play a crucial factor in how Surfnet builds infrastructure.

Home visits. This is where customers get involved. Anyone can reach out to our customer-service team to schedule a home visit—what we call a site survey—to determine if their location is eligible

for Surfnet services. These site surveys determine how close a home or business is to the nearest Surfnet fiber connection. Our goal is to ensure everyone has an opportunity to tap into the new fiber network.

Installation. Because Surfnet is a local business that aims to provide the best customer service, our goal with installations is to do it once and do it right. The Surfnet team prides itself on providing an installation experience that is easy on customers. It starts with scheduled appointments and a commitment to no hidden fees. Standard installation is free for Surfnet customers.

Our unique mountain terrain sometimes means installations can go beyond the standard process to connect homes to the nearest fiber node. In these cases, our customer-service team will let you know prior to the installation so that there aren't any surprises. Once installation is complete, customers can expect to see a noticeable jump in their internet speeds. Compared to previous connections, Surfnet's fiber-download speeds—such as streaming movies or browsing the internet—can increase by up to 1,000 percent. Upload speeds—like video calls on your mobile



phone—can increase as much as 3,330 percent.

The infrastructure and connections being installed today are built to remain viable for many years to come, supporting long-term connectivity in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Residents and business owners interested in fiber availability can visit Surfnet's website at www.surfnetc.com to learn more about construction timelines, service areas, and how to check availability at their address. Call 831-439-7873 ext. 747 for more information.

An advertisement for Surfnet Communications. On the left, a white service van with green accents is shown. The van has the Surfnet logo and the text "Wireless and Fiber Internet" and "831-439-7873 surfnetc.com". A worker is visible in the bucket lift of the van, working on a utility pole. On the right, there is a QR code, the text "Wireless & Fiber Internet for the Santa Cruz Mountains", "Fast | Reliable | Local", the phone number "831.439.7873", the website "Surfnetc.com", and the Surfnet Communications logo.

Wireless & Fiber Internet
for the Santa Cruz Mountains

Fast | Reliable | Local

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Communications

ADUs for Senior Parents
The Modern Family Win-Win
Keith Kanady

Life has a way of coming full circle. One day, your parents are teaching you how to ride a bike. Years later, they're asking you how to reset their Wi-Fi router. How can you keep them close without having to share a roof (and a Netflix account)?

The superhero of modern multigenerational living is the ADU, or Accessory Dwelling Unit. A cozy, self-contained retreat right in your backyard is the perfect gift for your aging parents. Ready to dive in? Let's break it down and sprinkle in some laughs while we're at it.

ADU Basics. Picture a small home, fully loaded with all the essentials: a bedroom, bathroom, kitchenette, and living area. It's not a guest room; it's a whole vibe. An ADU can be a charming backyard cottage, a snazzy garage conversion, or even an add-on to your existing home. Your parents can be part of family dinners, birthday parties, and playdates with the grandchildren. But, they also have their own space to retreat to when they've had enough of Fortnite marathons or your dog's barking spree. It's the best of both worlds, minus the thermostat wars.

Assisted Living vs. ADU. Assisted-living facilities start at around \$5,000 a month per person, and can cost much more. An ADU, on the other hand, is a one-time investment. Depending on your design choices, they typically run between \$100,000 and \$300,000 to build. Financing options, like home-equity loans, can soften the blow. Plus,

ADUs can increase your property's value.

Custom Comforts. ADUs are the *haute couture* of housing. Do you want wider doorways for walkers or wheelchairs? Check. Non-slip floors? You bet. A sunny patio for the morning crossword ritual? Done. Tailor this little haven as needed, and sneak in a few of their quirks (like that antique rocking chair they refuse to part with).

Before Breaking Ground. Before you start sketching your dream ADU, check the zoning rules in your area. Many cities have eased restrictions to encourage housing solutions like these. The bad news? Bureaucracy loves paperwork, so prepare to jump through some hoops.

Think Ahead. Life changes, so design with adaptability in mind. Wider doorways, step-free entrances, and other aging-friendly features are simple now but priceless later. Don't overlook the basics like water, electricity, and waste. These aren't glamorous decisions, but trust me, a clogged septic system isn't going to feel very HGTV. What starts as a senior-parent sanctuary can turn into so much more. Down the road, that ADU could be a rental for extra income, a guesthouse for visitors, or even your home office, if working from the kitchen table has lost its charm. It's a long-term investment in your property's versatility.

Budgeting. The cost of an ADU depends on its size, design, and finishes. If you want quartz countertops, prepare to pay top-dollar. If you stick to laminate, your wallet will thank you. Either way, ADU-specific financing programs and tax benefits can help ease the financial pinch.

The Takeaway. Building an ADU isn't just smart. It's a way to give your parents the comfort and independence they deserve while keeping them close. Plus, there's something undeniably cool about having a chic little backyard bungalow. Whether it's a parent pod, a future Airbnb, or just peace of mind for the years ahead, an ADU is a lifestyle upgrade for everyone involved.

Summit Veterinary Hospital
Leptospirosis
Dr. Fahimeh Zibae

Leptospirosis is a highly contagious bacterial disease that is spreading in the Bay Area. It can be deadly in dogs and, in rare cases, can spread to humans.

Leptospirosis bacteria can survive for weeks to months in urine-soaked soil or stagnant water. Dogs can become infected by drinking water contaminated with infected urine (usually from ponds, puddles, or lakes), or when cuts on their skin come in contact with infected soil or water. Symptoms generally begin within seven days.

Some infected dogs will have no signs of illness, or mild and transient symptoms, and recover on their own. Other dogs may develop severe, life-threatening illness. Common signs include fever, loss of appetite, vomiting, lethargy, abdominal pain, diarrhea, dehydration, drinking or urinating more than usual, weight loss, and stiffness or muscle pain. The disease can progress to kidney and/or liver failure. Some dogs may develop severe lung disease and rapid, difficulty breathing (pulmonary hemorrhage).

Leptospirosis is generally treated with antibiotics and supportive care. Depending on how sick an affected dog is, they may require fluid therapy, certain medications, and nutritional support. When leptospirosis is treated early, the chance of recovery is good. However, some dogs may be left with chronic kidney or liver disease.

Prevention. Vaccinate your dog annually. This can help protect people from infection, too. Avoid letting your dog drink from or swim in rivers, lakes, ponds, marshy areas, or slow-moving or stagnant water. Keep your dog away from farm animals and wild animals, particularly rodents, including carcasses.



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Community

Alma Equine

Making a Difference With Horses Suzanne Suwanda

The school year may be in the home stretch, but there's still time for students to earn community-service hours by volunteering for a local 501(C)(3) nonprofit. One opportunity that truly sparkles is Alma Equine, a unique learning hub that brings people together with horses to effect life-changing growth.

High-school students can join Alma Equine for a three-hour volunteer introduction to equine experiential learning and explore learning about themselves in the process. During this visit, students receive introductory horse-management training and have an opportunity to spend time and learn to communicate with horses while helping with barn chores.



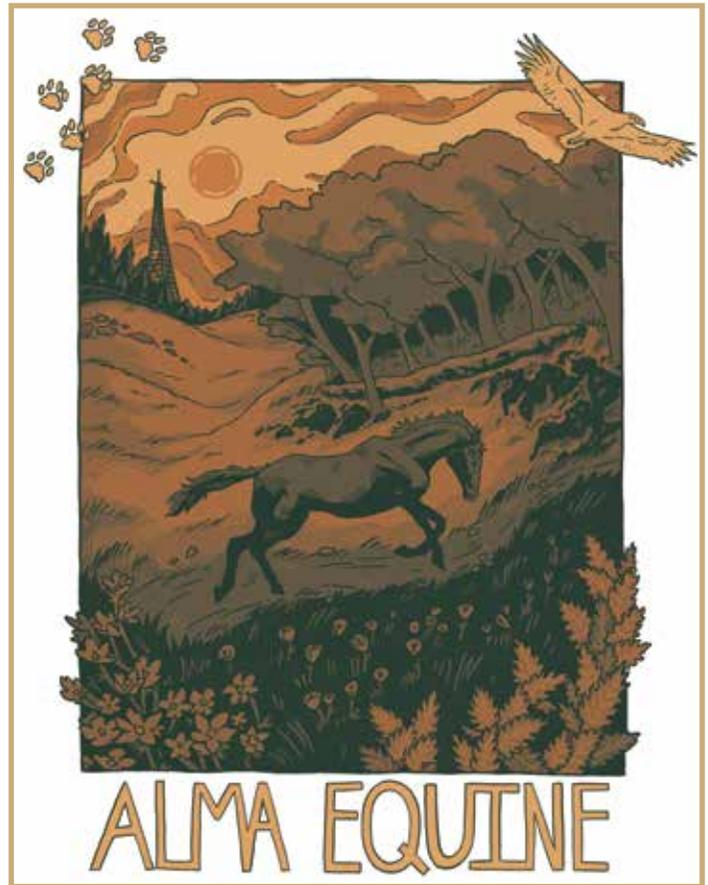
Jess and Nova

Best organized in groups of three participants, the sessions have spared creativity among many area students, including 16-year-old Hannah Botzas, an aspiring digital artist. Hannah created the 2025 graphic for Alma Equine. She emphasized landscape features, such as the rock wall and radio tower, in addition to plants such as Oregon grapes and dahlia roses. The shifting landscape and the horse confidently navigating it are also powerful symbols of the challenges and growth that are part of the Alma Equine experience.

"It was really important for me to capture the true spirit of Alma Equine, so I'm honored that I was able to do it," she shared.

For more information, visit www.almaequine.com, or email info@almaequine.com.

Alma Equine is located near Lexington Elementary School. It is dedicated to connecting people, animals, and the environment, envisioning a future where young people, through their interactions with horses, develop presence, empathy, and a deep connection with nature. Empowered to be their authentic selves, they will go on to make an impact on the world. For more information, call 415-519-8031.



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95033Talk

15 Years and Still Going

Sanjay Khandelwal

95033Talk is a local online email group for anyone living in the 95033 ZIP code or nearby areas of the Santa Cruz/Los Gatos Mountains to discuss local issues. We have a robust community of 2,600 people who use the list to get recommendations for services, ask and share advice, and discuss local issues. The group is particularly active in cases of emergencies or fires. There are a few other groups, including 95033Free and 95033Market. Information about all of them can be found at www.95033.org.

The group was formed in February 2011. It has been going strong for 15 years.

In the early days, there were three moderators. We used to have lots of debates on what we wanted this group to be. As Alexandra Hall, who founded this group, once said, "We did do a huge amount of work on figuring out the balance." We recognized that we needed to set the tone and culture. A lot of behind-the-scenes work went into it (and still does). Many people probably think this all just happened organically. There actually is a word for it: *Spezzatura*, the art of performing a difficult task in such a way that it looks effortless.

The group has a distinct culture. Old-timers (more than 100 folks have been members since 2011) know and understand

the norms and work to enforce them.

The group has had some kerfuffles. There were growing pains in the beginning. Some people used to lob grenades at the list fairly regularly. People got mad with the moderators for banning subjects and locking down topics such as politics, vigilantism, racism, mountain lions, and COVID.

We learned that no matter how you structure rules for a community, there will be bad-faith actors who will twist the rules to suit their views. Some people work around rules and bend them to their will, without ever crossing the clearly-drawn lines. The group has rules, more like guidelines, but we also exercise discretion. This requires

work and will inevitably mean some people will claim it's unfair since true intent is unknowable.

Civility. Empathy. Respect. These are three things that we try to enforce. We ask people to be kind and considerate in their posts and mindful that others may not share their viewpoints or beliefs. Email is a great tool in many ways, but subtle communication is hard to achieve.

All 95033Talk posts are archived and can be accessed by members. There is a wealth of information about mountain living that has been shared over the years. Visit 95033.org to join 95033Talk or any of the other local forums.



95033Talk main@95033talk.groups.io
 95033talk is the group for anyone living in the 95033 zip code or related areas of the Santa Cruz / Los Gatos Mountains to discuss local issues.

- asking for recommendations for services
- asking for advice / sharing advice
- discuss local and timely issues
- notifying neighbors of upcoming events
- provide / get information on emergencies / fire

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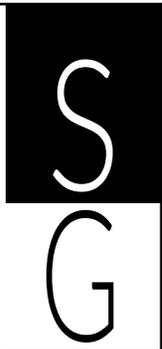
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COMPASS

adventures

The Monterey Zoo

Kathy McKinney

There's something timeless about visiting a zoo. The thrill of seeing animals I'd only read about in books is stitched into my early childhood memories. As an adult, I'm conflicted at the idea of wild animals living in confined spaces for human viewing. Nevertheless, when I heard about the Monterey Zoo, I decided to check it out.

Located on 51 acres in a mostly agricultural valley between Monterey and Salinas, the Monterey Zoo was accredited by the Zoological Association of America in 2020. It is modest in size and easy to navigate, with clearly marked maps and signage.

We visited on a Sunday afternoon, and while it wasn't crowded, the parking lot was full and quite a few families were enjoying a beautiful February day. Young children squealed in delight as they raced from one enclosure to the next, pressing their hands against the viewing windows. We overheard one young child explaining to her parents that no two zebra's stripes are alike, just like human fingerprints. (She was obviously paying attention in science class.)

The Monterey Zoo is home to more than 100 exotic animals, including several cat species, bears, zebras, rhinos, primates, reptiles, birds, and more. It took us about two hours, at a leisurely pace, to view all the exhibits. My personal favorites were the enormous, 5000-pound white rhinos and the primates.

You can move from one habitat to the next in minutes, but that proximity is a double-edged sword. Some of the enclosures felt small. The signage explains the zoo's conservation efforts and rescue stories, but it's hard to watch a large cat pace along the perimeter of its habitat. It's important to



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note that most of the animals are not taken from the wild, but are born in captivity or come from situations where they cannot survive independently.

The Monterey Zoo is open seven days a week, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is \$37.75 for visitors aged 15 and up, \$27.50 for children aged two to 14. Children under two are free. The zoo is located at 400 River Road in Salinas.

If you want to turn your visit into a staycation, there is an onsite bed-and-breakfast at the zoo. We didn't try it, but more information is at www.visionquestranch.com.

If you or your children enjoy seeing animals up close, the Monterey Zoo is worth a visit. It's just over an hour's drive from Summit and Highway 17, and if you take the faster coastal route, it's a lovely drive. Find out more at www.montereyzoo.org.

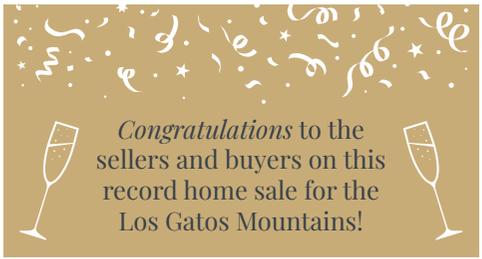


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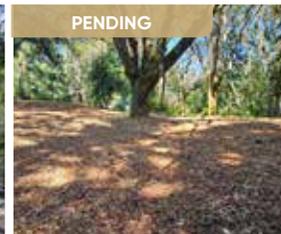


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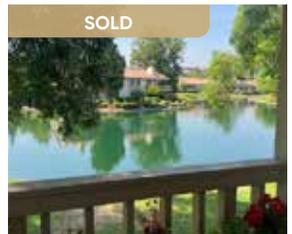
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calendar

SPECIAL EVENTS

Monday, March 2

Registration for the Santa Clara County Firesafe Council's spring chipping program opens. More information is at sccfiresafe.org.

Saturday March 7

Goal-setting workshop, featuring movement led by Jaime Domond from Cups and Yoga and a presentation by Dr. Dennis Evans, will be in Whitaker Hall at Skyland Church, from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Skyland Church is located at 25100 Skyland Road.

Thursday, March 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.

Wednesday, March 25

Earlybird registration for Santa Cruz County Firewise communities for free spring chipping program. For more information and to register, visit www.rcdsantacruz.org/spring-chipping-information.

Thursday, March 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.

Saturday, March 28

The "Lakeside in Wonderland" auction will be at the Lakeside School Community Center, 19621 Black Road, from 6 to 9 p.m. Live and silent auction, sit-down dinner, open bar. Purchase tickets and find more information at www.lakesidescf.org.

Sunday, March 29

Wines of the Santa Cruz Mountains Grand Wine Tasting, featuring 50 local wineries and 150 local wines, is from noon to 4 p.m., at the historic Mountain Winery in Saratoga. Tickets and winesofscm.com/gt2026.

Wednesday, April 1

Registration for the Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District's spring chipping program opens. More information is at www.rcdsantacruz.org/spring-chipping-information.

Saturday, April 4

95033free swap meet is from from 9 a.m. to noon, in the Loma Prieta Gymnasium, 23800 Summit Road.

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 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, or call Jaime at 831-200-8802.

Qigong class on Zoom from 9 to 10:30 a.m. Email 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, 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, or call Jaime at 831-200-8802.

Thursdays

Gentle Flow from 9 to 10 a.m. 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, 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.

Summit Ultimate Frisbee meets from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Loma Prieta Elementary School field. More information at 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.

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



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Four new trails

La Honda Creek Open Space

Neil Wiley

Driving up Skyline Boulevard on a sunny weekday is one of my favorite expeditions. It's a great way to experience beautiful nature views, escape traffic, and explore something new. Sometimes this means stretching out a little farther, for example, traveling north on Skyline to La Honda Creek Open Space on Highway 84 or beyond. I've hiked there four times.

On my first visit in January 2018, I drove down Highway 84 to the Sears Ranch entrance. The 20-car parking lot was almost full. I walked a wide trail where people could walk side-by-side through a large open valley where we could see grass-covered mountains. Grazing cows presented a bucolic scene. The ups and downs were relatively easy from 600 to 800 feet elevation. It was an out-and-back hike of about six miles.

My second hike took me to the Allen Road entrance at the north end of the preserve. It required a permit that gave me solitude but no water, restrooms, maps, or guides. (Maps are now available.)

I followed a broad shady trail to a small clearing where a narrow path took me about half a mile to what my map called "Big Tree." This 14-foot-diameter redwood was scarred and burned, but it had survived for hundreds of years. I walked back to the main trail, then turned left. A short walk brought me out of the forest into grassland where I saw an occupied residence and some old, deserted farm buildings. A small hill took me to a vista



point with some nice views. It was a view worth a three-mile walk.

My next visit to the Sears Ranch Road entrance was special. On June 3, 2022, I was invited to the opening of the new Grasshopper Loop trail where we celebrated Midpeninsula Open Space's 50th birthday, reaching 250 miles of public trail, and protecting 65,000 acres of greenbelt. We met Midpen's general manager, board members, employees, volunteers, friends, and several dogs.

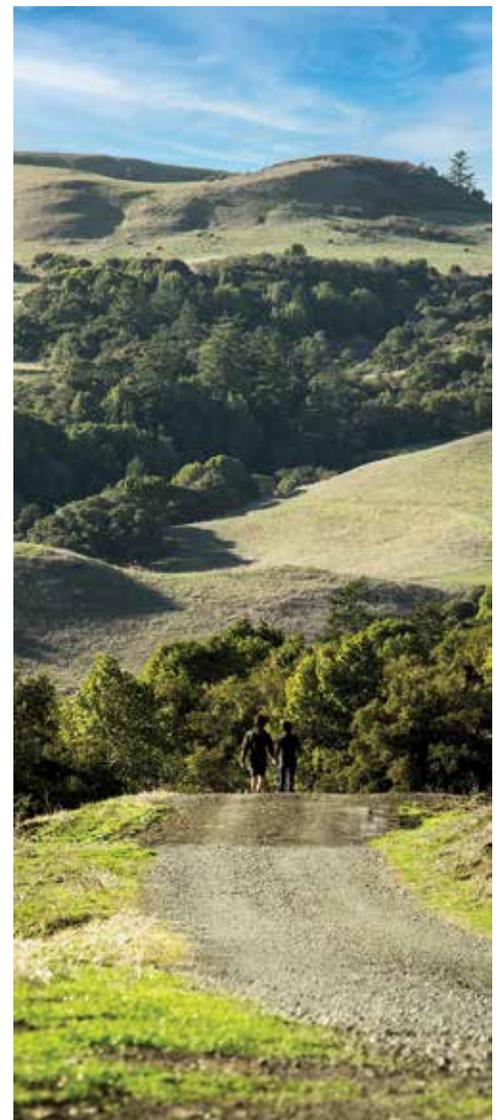
It was enjoyable, but the best part was walking the then-new 1.3-mile trail Grasshopper Loop. It offered minimal elevation gain on an easy walk through a varied landscape of grassland, oak woodlands, and redwood forest. Scenic views of distant hills were dotted with grazing cattle. A smooth dirt trail carried us through a forest with bigger trees. I walked out of the shade and found a scenic viewpoint and a comfortable bench.

This trail was easy, scenic, and with enough variety to keep it interesting. I recommend it for families and walkers of any age.

In January, on Martin Luther King Junior's birthday, I planned to see the new La Honda trails that connect the north and south entrances to a recently completed 17-mile trail network. I received my permit in just two working days, complete with a map, directions, and codes for access through a locked gate to a secure parking area.

Allen Road was narrow and slow, and it took some time to set the code number and open the lock. I did retrieve a map from the information board. My walk to

the new trails started with a long downhill trek though forest followed by a long uphill in open country to Vista Point where I climbed to the top with only one rest stop. It was



Loma Prieta Avenue

Debra Staab

Loma Prieta Avenue has served the Summit area for over 150 years. The road is just north of, and parallel to, Summit/Highland Road. The avenue starts at Summit Road just west of the Summit Store, where it runs slightly north and then makes a sharp right turn. It meanders southeast between straight stretches and hairpin curves for nearly three miles, all the while rising in elevation by over 1,000 feet. Loma Prieta Avenue then intersects Mt. Bache Road and Loma Prieta Way.

If you follow Loma Prieta Way another three miles, you will find Loma Prieta Road, which takes you north to the mountain top. Loma Prieta is the highest peak in the Santa Cruz Mountains, with an elevation of 3,790 feet. If you continue southeast on Loma Prieta Way for another ten miles or so, you eventually arrive in Gilroy.

Mexican Land Grants. When California was under Mexican rule in 1844, a large land grant of nearly 35,000 acres, the Soquel Augmentation, was given to Martina Castro, the daughter of a Spanish soldier. The northern boundary of the grant ran from Laguna del Sargento near Summit West to Mount Loma Prieta on the east. The eastern boundary dropped down from Loma Prieta to Soquel. The short distance from Soquel to Aptos formed the southern border. The line from Aptos back up to Laguna del Sargento established the western boundary. Loma Prieta Avenue sits just below the northern border.

American Pioneers. The southwest came under United States rule in 1848, the Gold Rush started in 1849, and California became a state in 1850. People from all over the world flocked to the area. In 1850, Castro subdivided her land and gave large parcels to each of her eight children. When Santa Clara Valley was filled with property claims, people headed to the hills to find land. The Castro holdings became prime real estate, and the family further divided their parcels as more settlers arrived. The area that contained Loma Prieta Avenue was tagged as Tract 24.

Charles McKiernan staked a claim at Summit West in 1851, and John and Susan Schultheis claimed land about two miles east near the Summit and the Old Santa Cruz Highway in 1852. Both lots were free government land meant for homesteading. The Burrell family arrived in

Loma Prieta Av

1853 and staked their claim a few miles east of the Schultheis family, near what would become Loma Prieta Avenue.

At the time, Burrell assumed that his land was free for the taking. It wasn't until seven years later, in 1859, when a new survey of the Soquel Augmentation was completed, that he learned his parcel was already deeded to one of Martina's daughters, Antonia Lodge Peck. Burrell did not want to lose the home he'd worked so hard to build, so even though it was a hardship, he agreed to pay the Pecks \$1,500 for about 1,500 acres.

The Meyer family arrived in the mountains in 1864, the Morrell family came in 1867, and the Wrights moved here in 1868. All three families purchased land from Burrell, and the group soon became known for their excellent vineyards. Meyer further subdivided his land into many small 20- to 30-acre parcels which eventually formed the German Colony.

The Santa Cruz Mountains Flourish.

Over the next 30 years, the region grew by leaps and bounds. Settlers came from all over. Many were wealthy bankers, lawyers, doctors, politicians, and professors. Scrub and brush made way for gardens, orchards and vineyards. Large estates, villas, resorts, schools, and churches were constructed. In 1880, the South Pacific Coast Railroad connecting San Jose to Santa Cruz roared through the Santa Cruz Mountains for the first time. The railroad towns of Wrights, Laurel, and Glenwood popped up. The fruit and wine industries boomed and logging was on a fast track to prosperity for all involved. There were now hundreds of people living in the mountains.

Loma Prieta Avenue became a showcase neighborhood. Rows of white picket fences lined both sides of the road, which spurred the local nickname "Whitewash Alley." It became even more distinguished when Burrell sold 26 acres to Josephine Clifford in 1880, for about \$500. Clifford was a well-known writer whose articles had been printed in multiple publications.

Having recently escaped an abusive marriage, she savored her new surroundings and described the area like this: "The avenue is lined all the way by cottages, villas, and gardens that make the heart glad at every

season of the year." She called her new home Monte Paraiso (mountain paradise) and went on to say, "Above and beyond this, we boast of a climate and of scenery which will be sought by tourists from all parts of the world, and the spot will become a Mecca to those in search of health."

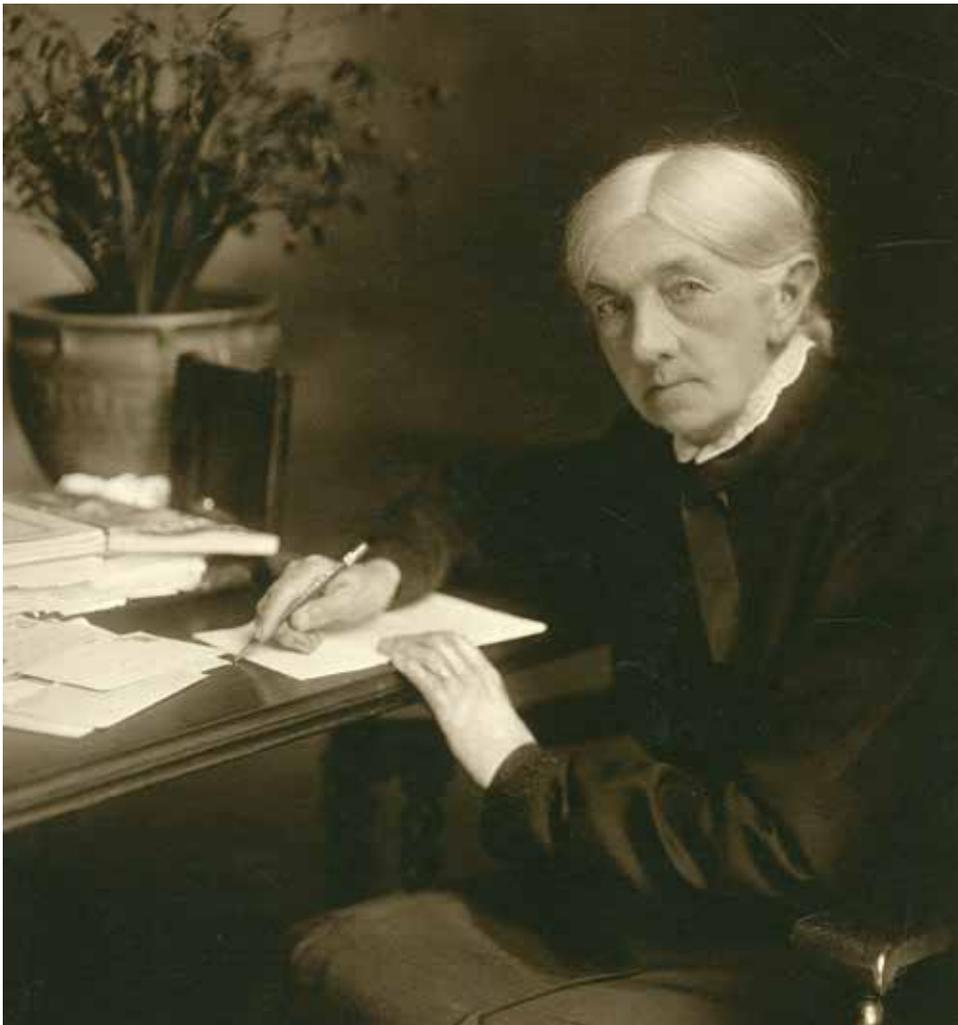
The McCrackins. Josephine married Andrew "Jackson" McCrackin in 1882, and they lived happily together at Monte Paraiso. He had made his fortune managing a successful silver mine in Arizona that produced over four million ounces of the metal. He cashed out to the tune of nearly a quarter-million dollars.

Josephine's career skyrocketed as she penned pieces for the *Overland Monthly*, the *Mountain Echo*, the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, and the *San Jose Mercury Herald* (now *Mercury News*). Her home became a bustle of literary activity. Her many visitors included Ambrose Bierce, Andrew P. Hill, Ina Coolbrith, Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller, Mark Twain, Herman Scheffauer, and Jack London.

The Great Summit Fire of 1899. On October 8, 1899, a careless settler was burning brush when high winds whipped up



Josephine McCracken at Monte Paraiso



The Sempervirens. After the fire, Josephine was so distraught over the destruction of the beautiful redwood forest that she started a movement. Enlisting help from photographer Andrew P. Hill, John Muir and the Sierra Club, botanists, lawyers, the press, and state politicians, McCrackin set about to create a protected redwood park in the Big Basin area. The land was owned by a lumber baron named Henry L. Middleton. Middleton's machinery was already in place and ready to clear-cut the area. McCrackin didn't give up, and in 1901 the state purchased the land for \$250,000. The Redwood Park (now Big Basin) was created, and the Coastal Redwoods (*Sequoia Sempervirens*) became a protected species. McCrackin founded the Sempervirens Club to protect the majestic redwoods for the long term.

Jackson McCrackin died in 1904 and is buried at Monte Paraiso, where his grave marker is still visible today. Josephine moved to Santa Cruz where she continued writing and advocating for environmental conservation. She died in 1920 and is buried in Santa Cruz.

Loma Prieta Avenue Today. By the late 1930s, the lumber barons had felled all of the trees they could reach, and the lumber industry basically dried up. This caused the rail-freight industry to also collapse. With light passenger ridership and frequent storm damage, the South Pacific Coast Railroad abandoned its mountain route in 1940. The same year, Highway 17 opened and cars and trucks took over where the trains left off.

Although life on the avenue lost some of its bustle after the demise of the railroad and subsequent decline of Wright's Station, the natural beauty remained. We still have

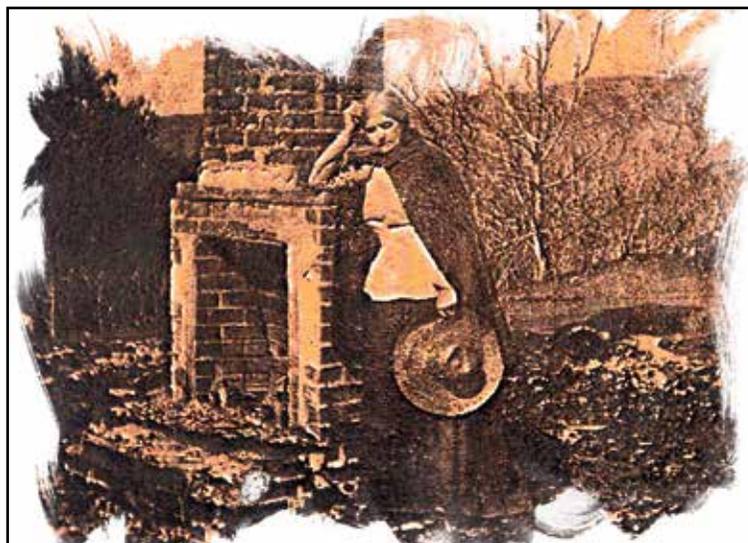
the bucolic scenery, fresh air, and glorious (second growth) redwood trees. Stately villas and quaint cottages continue to line the road. Some properties still sport the iconic white-picket fences. The fruit and wine industries continue to thrive. Near the top of Loma Prieta Avenue, three successful vineyards/wineries are in operation: Lago Lamito Vineyards, Muns Vineyard, and the Loma Prieta Winery. With its historical roots, Loma Prieta Avenue remains a highly desirable neighborhood even today.

out of nowhere. The fire instantly grew and spread across the mountain. Up on Loma Prieta, most of the German Colony was destroyed. Lower down near the Summit, the estates of Mrs. Josephine Clifford McCrackin, Dr. Edmund Goldmann, and Mr. Emil Meyer were all caught in the flames. The fire roared and smoke was too thick to see. Over 50 locals, including women and children, came from as far away as Alma and Soquel to help extinguish the blaze.

Emil Meyer was a vintner whose property was the Mare Vista Winery. Using buckets, pots, and pans, a bucket brigade saved his house. The fire then rushed towards the gas storage tank holding 100 gallons of gas. Mr. Meyer himself leaped to the rescue and broke the gas pipe connected to the winery.

Things got significantly worse as the uncontrolled flames destroyed the water tower,

their only source of water. In a split second, Meyer directed the crew to attach their hoses to his wine vats. It took the team all night using 4,000 gallons of claret to finally douse the inferno. Some of the crew did not survive. Down river, locals reported that Los Gatos Creek ran red with wine.



Josephine at the ruins of Monte Paraiso after the Great Summit Fire

nature

Love is in the Water California Newts Bruce Sudweeks

'Tis the season for amphibian romance. These two California newts (*Taricha torosa*) were observed at Lexington Reservoir, near where Soda Springs enters the lake.

These cute little creatures are endemic to California, which means you can only find them in the Golden State. They have a homing instinct like salmon and steelhead trout, and return to the location where they hatched when it is time to reproduce.

It turns out they have a super power that allows them to be wildfire-resistant. When the temperature goes up due to a wildfire, these newts produce a full-body, foamy, fire-resistant protective layer.

They are one of the world's most toxic creatures on the planet. If you touch one, you should wash your hands. Eating one would be fatal to the newt and the human.



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California Condor

Photo by
Mercury Freedom

Mercury captured this photo at Pinnacles National Park in February. The California Condor is one of the most iconic and critically endangered birds in North America.

Since 2003, Pinnacles National Park has been a key partner in the California Condor Recovery Program, serving as a release and management site.

With its massive wingspan and striking presence, many California Condors find sanctuary at Pinnacles National Park.

Spring is an ideal time to visit this lovely national park, right in our own backyard.

More information about Pinnacles National Park is at www.nps.gov/pinn/index.htm.



Hummingbird nest
Photo by Faizi Samadani



*A deer having a
breakfast of grass
in my backyard
in Villa Del Monte.*
Photo by Neil Wiley.

Loma Prieta School District
Kindergarten Enrollment
Principal Ramsay

Loma Prieta Elementary School is now enrolling incoming kindergarten students for the 2026-27 school year. Children who turn five years old on or before **September 1, 2026**, are eligible to register.

Families in the Loma Prieta school district become part of a close-knit, mountain-strong community known for academic excellence and strong family partnerships. Our kindergarten program is centered around the science of reading, with focused instruction in phonics, vocabulary development, and comprehension. Students participate in enrichment classes including physical education, art, and library, that support a well-rounded education. A recently refurbished kindergarten playground, made possible by a bond approved by our generous community, offers a safe and engaging outdoor space for our youngest students.

How to Enroll. Register your incoming kindergarten student at www.loma.k12.ca.us. Select “New Student Registration,” then “Kindergarten Registration.” The registration page includes a list of required documentation and a link to the online enrollment portal. Use a computer, as the portal is not compatible with mobile devices.

Families who need assistance or accommodations during the registration process can email l.sullivan@lpjUSD.us. We will offer a kindergarten campus tour for registered families on **Thursday, May 7**. You can meet staff, explore the campus, learn about our curriculum, and get information on transportation and after-school care options. We are excited to welcome our newest learners and their families to Loma Prieta Elementary in the fall of 2026.



schools

Building Blocks Preschool Music Wall

Savvy Hills and Greg Messa

Building Blocks Cooperative Preschool focuses on community. We thrive on active family participation to create a nurturing environment where children learn and grow through shared responsibility, creativity, and connection.

A recent example of this spirit came is a new music wall in our play yard, designed and built by parents Georgette and Greg Messa. Drawing on their deep experience in the arts and education, the Messas transformed an outdoor wall into a dynamic, hands-on musical space where children can explore sound through movement, touch, and play.

Greg, a professional percussionist and composer, and Georgette, a theater-

arts teacher, brought a deep understanding of creative expression, storytelling, and child-centered learning to the project.

They thoughtfully designed the music wall as an age-appropriate and inviting open-ended space where preschoolers can tap rhythms, experiment with sounds, and collaborate with friends. The project reflects the Messas' belief in the power of the arts to foster curiosity, confidence, and connection..

The music wall embodies the heart of our cooperative spirit: families sharing what they know and love for the benefit of all children. Children see their village actively investing in their growth.

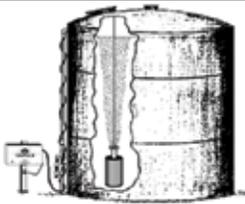
At Building Blocks, education lives in relationships, shared projects, and everyday acts of collaboration. We thank the Messas



for contributing their talents.

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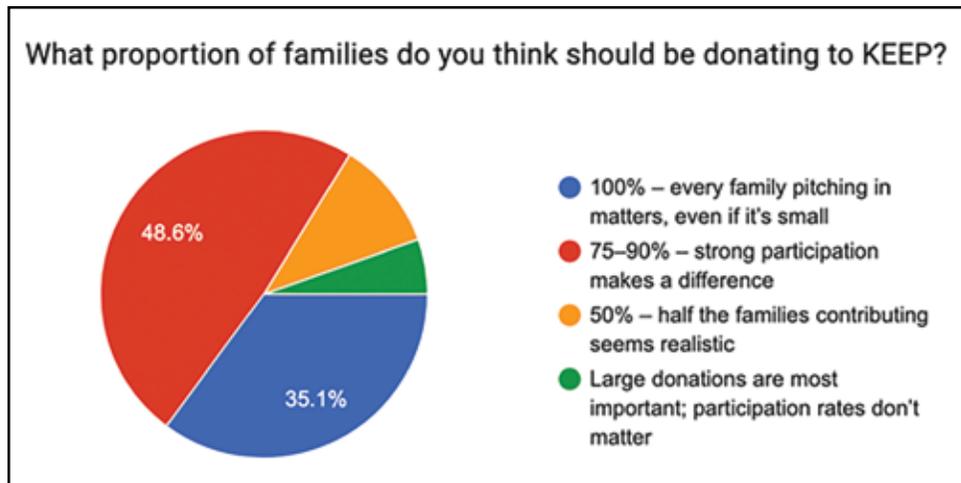
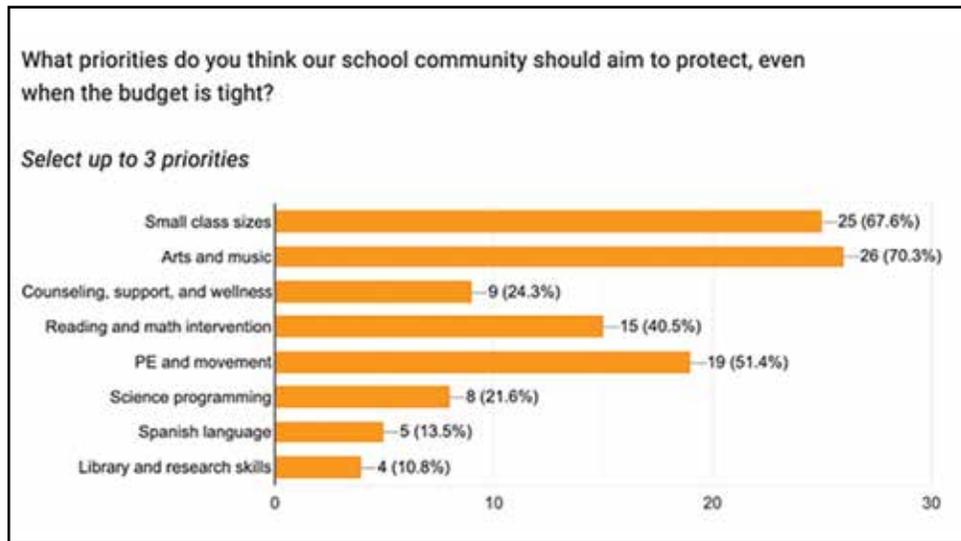
**Loma Public Education Fund
Community Survey
LPEF Board**

This fall, 37 families took the time to complete LPEF’s community survey about our annual **Keep Excellent Education Programs (KEEP)** campaign. Candid responses represented families from kindergarten through middle-school. The feedback was thoughtful and helpful.

When families were asked which priorities should be protected even in lean years, arts, music, and small class sizes stood far above the rest. Art and music education cultivates creative problem-solving, judgment, comfort with ambiguity, and other critical skills that our children will need in an AI-infused world. Families and teachers, after several years of experience with combination-grade classes at Loma, have a strong preference to minimize combo classes and keep class sizes small at both Loma and C.T. English.

About 70 percent of respondents correctly identified KEEP as a fundraiser that supports programs the district can’t afford through government funding. That shared understanding is encouraging. At the same time, many families asked for more transparency about how priorities are set and what would be lost without KEEP funding. LPEF publishes articles in *MNV* and the LPEF blog that attempt to answer questions openly and clearly. We’ll continue building this library of information at LPEF.org/blog.

One clear message we heard is that families want a stronger voice in how decisions are made. This year, we’re inviting the community to help the LPEF board prioritize funding for the 2026–27 school year. We’ll share clear context about which programs or positions are potentially on the chopping block, what those programs mean for students, and what tradeoffs exist when funding is limited. We’ll ask families to vote on what matters most. This input will directly inform how LPEF approaches



funding decisions for the coming year.

Families also made it clear that broad participation in the KEEP campaign matters more than a few large donations. While quite a few respondents identified full participation as the ideal, more than 80 percent believe that strong participation, involving at least three-quarters of all families, is essential to the health of the school community. This year, our campaign will be about inclusivity and momentum.

One survey question captured what’s at

stake: *If LPEF stopped raising funds, how would your family feel about larger class sizes and the loss of programs like library, art, and music?* Over 90 percent of respondents said it would matter a great deal. Families understand what’s at risk, and they also want a more direct role in protecting what makes Loma and C.T. English special. Your feedback is already shaping how LPEF makes decisions. Read the full survey results at LPEF.org/blog. You can also email us at president@lpef.org.

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schools

Lexington School Jason Deppong

Lexington celebrated the 100th day of school at the end of January. Our TKs and kindergarten students celebrated by dressing up as centenarians, with some help from their parents. It was extremely cute! Students also shared collections of 100 throughout the day.

Mathnasium Campbell-Los Gatos returned to Lexington to lead another interactive Family Math Night. Fisher Middle School students, including many Lexington alumni, volunteered to help run math activities and games for our students and their families. Mathnasium has been a great local supporter for developing



based on input from all stakeholders. After the three-day visit, the evaluators shared their preliminary findings. They were very impressed with the progress we have made over the last five years, as well as the community and governing board support for the program. IB PYP Coordinator Anna Kearney and I presented the findings to the Lexington community to celebrate. We will receive a more formal report in about six weeks that will include additional comments by IB evaluators.

Global School Play Day took place for its fourth year at Lexington. GSPD was organized by a group of educators in 2015. Their mission states: "During Global School Play Day, participants are encouraged to allow students ample time for free play without the use of screens, structured games, or adult



Lexington thinkers. This year, we also enjoyed a local Smashburger food truck.

A local Ohlone expert, Keith Gutierrez, visited our third-grade classroom. He talked to students about how the original inhabitants of this area lived. He showed students how to make a fire from natural materials and how the Ohlone practiced hunting.

Two members from the International Baccalaureate organization virtually visited Lexington to evaluate our Primary Years Program. Established IB PYP schools around the world are evaluated every five years and must meet high expectations and standards to continue as an authorized school. The process began 18 months ago with a self-study reflection on our program





direction. The idea is to let children explore their creativity, problem-solving skills, and social interactions in an unstructured and spontaneous environment. Over 81 countries participate. TK-5 students brought games, stuffed animals, dolls, building materials, model cars, and many other items from home. They wandered the entire school visiting classrooms, the lower field and garden, and made new friends of all ages. It was a great way to collaborate, problem solve, be creative for a long period of time, and fight “boredom” without the use of electronic devices. I brought in my vintage Star Wars toys again and enjoyed watching students play with them as I did as a child. It wasn’t just a day of play for the students!

Our fifth-grade students have begun the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program Exhibition. This is the culminating project for all IB primary schools around the world. The class collaboratively developed



a big conceptual “Central Idea” under a particular theme. This year, it will fall under “Sharing The Planet.” Students research a topic of their choice that they are passionate about. They work with a mentor, interview experts, decide on an action based on

their learnings, and reflect throughout the process. They will present their findings to the public in the evening on May 14. Everyone is welcome.

*Photos by
Jason Deppong and Kajsa Byrne*

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