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2026



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and the Milky Way by night.

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2 Beds | 1 Bath  
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**COMING  
SOON**

**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**

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For a No-Hassle Consultation

Summit Sisters  
Jammin' at Silver Mountain Winery  
May 30<sup>th</sup> at 1-4pm



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DRE 01342694

# IS

# 18355 Idylwild Road

LOS GATOS

\$3,600,000

4 Bedrooms

3 Bathrooms

3717 Sq Ft

5.68 Acre Lot



Find your Sanctuary in this exquisite custom built home (2012) in fantastic Idylwild neighborhood minutes from town

Spacious rooms, vaulted ceilings, natural light, open floor plan, indoor/outdoor entertaining, gourmet kitchen, stunning primary suite

Solar powered with battery storage. Lovely creekside setting includes 3 lots. Great location, best Los Gatos Schools

See the virtual tour at  
[18355IdylwildRoad.com](http://18355IdylwildRoad.com)

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COMPASS

**The May issue of  
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We invite individuals and organizations to submit letters and articles. Email [kathy@paralleldesign.com](mailto: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
Business card, horiz. (2 1/4" high by 3 3/4" wide)	165
Jumbo business card (2 1/4" high by 5" wide)	236
Quarter-page, vertical (4 1/2" high by 3 3/4" wide)	302
Quarter-page, horizontal (2 1/4" high by 7 1/2" wide)	302
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Half-page (4 1/2" high by 7 1/2" wide)	495
Two-thirds page (2 columns, 10" high by 5" wide)	616
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Page (10" high by 7 1/2" wide)	935
Special position	add 20%
Four-color page or 2/3 page	add \$500
Four-color half, third- or quarter-page ad	add \$250
Four-color business card	add \$100

Frequency discounts available.

Classified and business directory \$9 per formatted line

**Circulation**

More than 4000 homes and businesses  
in the Santa Cruz Mountains

[mountainnetworknews.com](http://mountainnetworknews.com)

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

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**Our Cover**

**Sea Stack at  
Davenport Beach**

**Photo by Mercury Freedom**

Recently, Mercury participated  
in FotoClave, a national  
photography event that was held  
in Santa Cruz this year.

During one workshop,  
Mercury photographed the  
sea stack at Davenport Beach.

He used a neutral-density filter,  
like sunglasses for your lens.

To make up for the reduced  
amount of light and get  
a proper exposure,  
he slowed down the shutter  
speed to about a half-second.

This slow shutter allowed the  
ocean movement to blur, created  
streams as the water receded,  
and isolated the focus point.

See more of Mercury's photos  
on page 24.

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# events

## Pizza Vittoria Mike Lerman

Treat the mom in your life on Mother's Day on **Sunday, May 10**. We will feature brunch specials and an artisan craft pop-up with thoughtful gifts.

Join us every Tuesday evening, **beginning May 19**, for our endless pizza and salad bar, from 5 to 7 p.m. Enjoy live music, delicious wood-fired pizza and salad, and visiting with your neighbors.

On **Wednesday, May 20**, we will donate 10 percent of the day's proceeds to the Lakeside School Community

Foundation. Enjoy a delicious dinner while supporting enrichment, technology, and other programs at Lakeside School.

For more information, visit our website at [pizzeriavittoria.com](http://pizzeriavittoria.com), call us at 408-353-5633, or scan the QR code.



## Loma Public Education Fund Sip 4 Schools

Join us on **Sunday, May 17**, from noon to 5 p.m., at Wrights Station Vineyard and Winery, for LPEF's annual Sip 4 Schools event.

Sip 4 Schools is LPEF's annual spring gathering where families and children visit the taco truck, catch up with friends, and support local schools.

Wrights Station donates 30 percent of all sales to LPEF. More information is at [LPEF.org](http://LPEF.org).

Wrights Station Vineyard and Winery is located at 24250 Loma Prieta Avenue.



## Mountain Farmers Market Returns Marla Ellis

The Mountain Farmers' Market is back. Your go-to Friday hangout for great food, live music, and fresh, local, organic produce returns for its third season. The market is held every Friday, **May 1 through October 30**, from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m., on the Loma Prieta Playfield at the Mountain Community Complex, 23845 Summit Road.

Shop for the season's best organic, locally-grown produce to take home. Bring your appetite and explore a selection of international street food perfect for casual dining outdoors. Enjoy a live musical performance. Browse our eclectic showcase of local crafters and handmade treasures.

We welcome some amazing new vendors and many familiar faces and vendors who return this year.

It's the perfect spot to connect with the community and create lasting memories for the whole family. We hope to see you there!

**The Mountain Farmers Market is sponsored by the Loma Prieta Community Foundation.**



## Los Gatos Community Concert Lauren Jelencovich

The Los Gatos Community Concert Association presents a performance with Lauren Jelencovich on **Sunday, May 3**, at the Los Gatos High School Theatre, 20 High School Court.

Winner of *Star Search* and Andrea Bocelli's World Scholarship, Lauren has performed alongside luminaries such as Renée Fleming and toured globally with Yanni. Yanni has described Lauren's voice as "the most beautiful sound I've ever heard."

Tickets are \$30 for adults, \$5 for students, and \$25 for seniors. You can purchase a family pass for \$65.

Doors open at 2 p.m., and the concert begins at 2:30 p.m. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [lgcca.org](http://lgcca.org).

## 95033 Flea Market Carol Gibbons

The 95033 Flea Market will open for the season on **Sunday, May 3**, with a Mother's Day theme. If you have treasures to sell, email [cmvgibbo@gmail.com](mailto:cmvgibbo@gmail.com) to reserve your space. You can reserve a selling space for a day, or subscribe for the season. Admission for shoppers is free, so come and shop for bargains.

The market is held the first Sunday of every month through November, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., in the Building Blocks Preschool parking lot, 23845 Summit Road.

## Sudden Oak Death Blitz Jane Manning

Help our forests by volunteering for the 2026 Sudden Oak Death blitz.

It's easy and free. Complete a mandatory online training module that takes about 30 minutes. Pick up sampling packets at the CalFire Saratoga Summit Station 21, 12900 Skyline Boulevard, between **May 8 through 10**. Collect bay leaf samples anytime during the weekend, then drop off your packet at the fire station by 7 p.m. on **Monday, May 11**.

More information is at [www.sodblitz.org](http://www.sodblitz.org).

### Endless Pizza & Salad Bar Returns!

Every Tuesday, 5pm - 7pm

Starts May 19th

Live music + good neighbors

- Adults \$18
- Kids - pay your age (5 years = \$5)

🍕 Mother's Day 5/10: Brunch specials +  
artisan crafts pop-up



# events

## Burrell School Winery May Events Rich Leonetti

Join us for some fun events this month at Burrell School Winery.

On **Saturday, May 2**, we welcome our newest local artist, Suzy Rad, to the tasting room. Suzy is a self-taught Santa Cruz-based acrylic painter specializing in neo-realistic wildlife and pet portraits. Meet Suzy from 1 to 4 p.m., have a glass of wine, and enjoy her amazing art.

Our bi-annual cellar alumni sale will be **Friday through Monday, May 22 to 25**. From noon to 5 p.m., winemaker Dave will pour a great selection of rare, aged wines in the Barrel Room. Quantities are limited and orders are first-come, first-served.



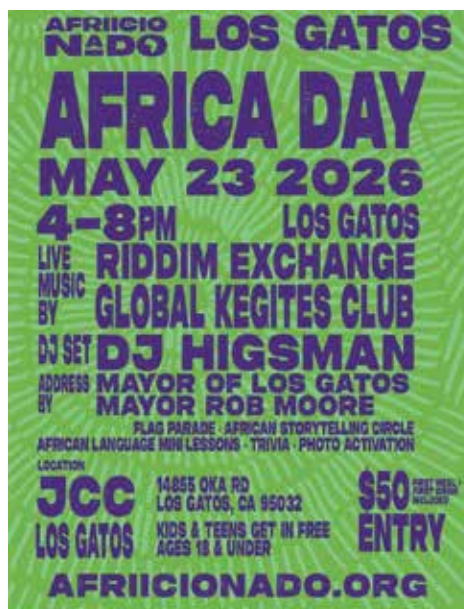
## South Skyline Fire and Rescue Pancake Breakfast

South Skyline Fire and Rescue holds its annual pancake breakfast on **Saturday, May 23**, from 8 to 11 a.m., at the Saratoga Summit Cal Fire Station, 12900 Skyline Boulevard. Stop in for breakfast and meet the South Skyline Fire and Rescue firefighters. Enjoy all-you-can-eat pancakes for only \$10 per person. Children under age 12 eat free. More information is at southskylinefire.org.

## Africa Day

Suzanne Suwanda

Celebrate African heritage and learn about the cultures, history, and contributions of African people across the world. Africa Day will be on **Saturday, May 23**, from 4 to 8 p.m., at the JCC in Los Gatos, 14855 Oka Road. Enjoy Afrobeat and traditional African music, storytelling circles, a flag parade, food, art, traditional singing and gyration presented by the global Kegites Club, and live music by Riddim Exchange. Tickets and more information are at afriicionado.org.



## Theatre in the Mountains Mountain's Got Talent A Community Talent Show

Chris Arns

This summer, Theatre in the Mountains invites performers aged eight to 100 to audition for *Mountain's Got Talent*. This community talent showcase will be held for three nights, under the open sky at the Redwood Amphitheater behind the Loma Prieta Playfield.

In-person auditions will be held on **Thursday and Friday, May 14 and 15**, and **Friday, May 22**. If you can't make it in person, submit a video audition by **Friday, May 14**. Performances will be **Friday through Sunday, August 14 to 16**.

For more information and to sign up, visit [TheatreintheMountains.com](http://TheatreintheMountains.com).

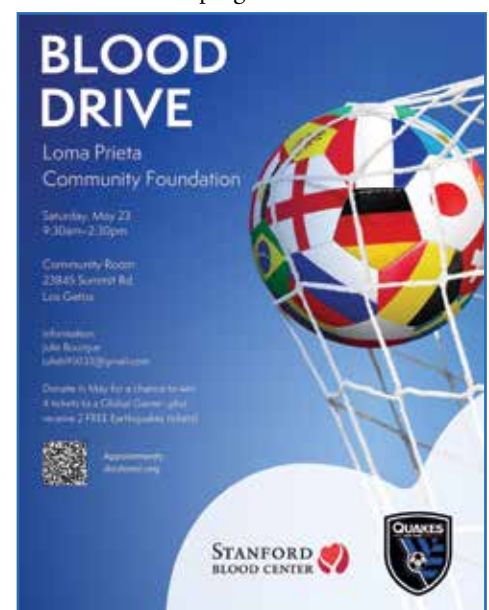
## Loma Prieta Community Foundation Stanford Blood Drive Julie Bourque

The Loma Prieta Community Foundation will sponsor a Stanford Blood Drive on **Saturday, May 23**, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. It will be held in the Community Center Room at the Mountain Community Complex, 23845 Summit Road.

To make an appointment and sign up, visit [sbcdonor.org](http://sbcdonor.org). Click on the "find a blood drive" icon on the bottom right side of the page, and select the Summit Road location.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel our blood drive scheduled for March 28 at the last minute. The north campus was temporarily out of water.

Donating blood through Stanford Blood Drives on the mountain is fun and easy. You'll see friends and neighbors, enjoy a great snack, and most importantly, have the satisfaction of helping someone in need.



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)

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

Paul Karz and Ryan Ortiz from California State Parks will share the history of the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park on **Thursday, May 7**, from 7 to 9 p.m., at the Loma Prieta School Forum, 23800 Summit Road. Everyone is welcome to this free Loma Prieta Museum History event.

On **Saturday, May 9**, from 9 a.m. to noon, you can join us for a guided tour of the Forest of Nisene Marks and the site of the Lost Town of Loma Prieta. We'll also visit the epicenter of the 1989 earthquake. We will meet 9 a.m., in the parking lot at the Porter Family Picnic Area. It's a relatively easy two-mile hike. Bring comfortable shoes and water for the hike, and a picnic lunch for



**Town of Loma Prieta, 1890**

after the tour if you wish.

We request a \$10 donation per adult. You can register and pay at [www.LomaPrietaMuseum.org](http://www.LomaPrietaMuseum.org). When you enter the park, let the rangers know that you are with the Loma Prieta Museum Tour. Your \$8 parking fee will be waived if you are on the list.

The annual Santa Cruz County History Fair will be held on **Saturday, May 16**, from noon to 4 p.m., at the London Nelson Community Center, 301 Center Street in Santa Cruz. About 30 museums and parks will display local history at their booths. This one-day event is well worth attending to learn about the abundant history of our area.

You can email us at [LomaPrietaMuseum@gmail.com](mailto:LomaPrietaMuseum@gmail.com), or text to 408-529-0254. For more information or to donate, visit us at [www.LomaPrietaMuseum.org](http://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.



**Ryan Ortiz**



**Paul Karz**

# Angelé Price

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



**ACTIVE**

**2081 Sufonet Drive**  
 Remodeled, expanded & re-designed in 2021, like brand new, modern home w/ double door entry situated in the sought-after Carlton n'hood bordering Los Gatos. 4/2.5 1755 sq. ft. \$2,700,000



**ACTIVE**

**25991 Mar Vista Ct.**  
 Majestic and stunning design with views of Monterey Bay resting upon 2.4 sunny flat acres. 3 bd., 2.5 bath plus library and bonus bedroom. 3284 sq. ft. Call for price.



**ACTIVE**

**249 Cresci Rd.**  
 Mostly flat, sunny lot with potential pretty views. 3 acres. \$225,000



**SOLD!**

**2 No Name Road**  
 A gem! 2.5 flat, sunny acres with 3000 +sq ft of living room. Solar, powerwall, and tons of charm! 3 beds, 2.5 bath. Price upon request. \$1,730,000



**SOLD!**

**805 Old Mill Pond Rd.**  
 Luxurious, contemporary home set on a sunny site with views. Dramatic high ceilings & amazing open space concept. 4 bedrooms and approx. 2800 sf ft. 9 acres. \$1,350,000

**COMPASS**

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

## Summit Riders Bids Farewell Suzanne Cornelius

With great sadness, the directors of Summit Riders Horseman's Association voted at the end of 2025 to discontinue their beloved club, citing dwindling numbers of participants and equestrian properties in the Summit area.

In its heyday, the club had a robust membership and a busy year-round calendar of events. We enjoyed trail rides, shows, playdays, and a full program of activities for youth. Families gathered at the Summit Riders arena at Parker Ranch on Miller Hill Road for hours of fun and camaraderie. As original members aged and young participants moved away to new opportunities, participation declined. The COVID-19 quarantine had a devastating impact, along with rising real-estate pressures that do not favor equestrian facilities.

At a closing event in December, I recognized the final SRHA Board. Vice president Jill Cole grew up in Summit Riders and served as a judge at the club's last playday. Her mother is Summit Riders royalty, Nancy Cole. Secretary Melany Moore was a Summit Riders parent, and served numerous terms on the board. She made the playday ribbons by hand with her children, brought lemonade and ran the barbecue at our events, and served as president for multiple terms. The club owes her an enormous debt.

Treasurer Jodi Louderback kept track of club finances and carefully guided the club through the winding trails of non-profit dissolution. Board member Rebecca Smith was a Summit Riders parent and a riding member who contributed huge efforts to the club. On playdays, she drove both children and their horses to the arena.

Board member Chris Smith wrote articles for our club newsletter, and board member



*Past president and long-time SRHA volunteer  
Marlene Takle with her horse Niffer.*

Jen Haas was a playday judge. Jen is creating a group chat list (Summit Equestrians) so members can stay in touch and ride together.

We also recognized a number of long-time volunteers and supporters in attendance:

Sue and Randall Landaiche, Nancy Cole, Diane Enderle, Neil Wiley, and Roger Mason. I offered a toast to past president



Marlene Takle, who was unable to attend. Some of the club's special items, including the revered Perpetual Trophy for the Costume Class, will be donated to the Loma Prieta Museum. All remaining funds will be donated to non-profits Friends of Bear Creek Stables, DreamPower Horsemanship, and Summit Horse Rescue.



*Summit Riders was always a special place  
for children and horses.*



*(Left to right) Melany Moore, Rebecca Smith  
and the late Michael Hudson unveil the new  
Summit Riders sign Hudson made in 2022.*



*Playday fun and exercise*



*Even the work parties were fun.*



**Summit Deck Doctor  
Deck Tips  
Rupert Hart**

Before I became your friendly neighborhood Summit Deck Doctor, I was the Hilltop Handyman, based off Radonich Road. After being asked to stain a deck or two, I realized there are thousands of decks in the Santa Cruz Mountains, so I changed my company name and focus. That was 23 years, 1,400 decks, and almost 2 million-square-feet ago. I have learned a few things over the decades, and I want to share some of my hard-won knowledge with you.

Decks need to be stained to protect them from cracking, splintering, rotting, and warping. It also makes them look nice. As they get older, the deck stain you use will move from semitransparent, to semi-opaque, to opaque (or solid) to cover up accumulated imperfections.

Semitransparent stains come in traditional oil-based, water-based, or hybrid. All the research and development over the last decade or more has been in hybrid stains,

that are a mixture of oil and water. You'd think it wouldn't work, but it's more like oil and vinegar at an Italian restaurant. They actually mix well.

Matching your existing deck color with your new stain is important. When your deck starts to get gray breakouts, it is time to re-stain.

Many decks have areas where the stain is in good condition, usually shady areas under porches or vertical surfaces like handrail posts. The best solution is to stain the deck the same color as the decking that is still in good shape. This can avoid a two-tone look, and makes everything homogenous. It also saves you the money of staining areas that are in good shape. (Handrails are expensive to redo.) We often match the color of an oil-based stain into a hybrid, so it is helpful to have the old stain in liquid form. Make sure your deck-refinishing contractor leaves you some and store it in a cool place.

Some people want to change the deck color a bit. We don't recommend this. Imagine the boards under the porch are tan, and you put new red stain on the whole deck. The shady areas won't change color and will stay tan, but the bare boards will now be red. It's not a good look. In a less extreme case of a worn deck, it is best to match the shady areas.

Unfortunately, deck stains are not yet scannable and computerized like paints. We get to the right color by trial and error. Very few deck-staining specialists match colors, and some offer only three standard colors. We have several custom colors and the ability to match.

A final tip: compare potential stain colors brushed out onto wood or a white card against existing stain in the shade. The sun will bleach out the differences between two similar stain colors.

If your deck has gray breakouts or is totally gray, it needs stain. Get it done now so you can enjoy it all summer. Call me at 408-353-3325 for a free estimate.



**Summit Veterinary Hospital  
New Veterinarian**

**Michelle McCune, DVM**

**Summit Veterinary Hospital has welcomed a new veterinarian to their team, Dr. Michelle McCune. Dr. McCune works at the hospital on Wednesdays. She shared this introduction:**

I graduated with my Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1996. I moved to the Santa Cruz Mountains in 2017, where I live with my husband, a very old dog (Gizzie, who is turning 17), and our four rescue cats. My son is completing his master's degree at Arizona State University, and my daughter is working on her Ph.D. at the University of California, Davis.

I enjoy internal medicine and preventive medicine, as well as nurturing the bond between people and their pets. I think communication is key, and I strive to educate and inform so that everyone is part of the best care team for their pets.

When I'm not in the clinic, I can often be found in my home art studio, painting or sculpting wildlife. I am a professional artist and a leading conservation-art safari guide to countries in Africa. I volunteer as a docent at Año Nuevo State Park and also enjoy hiking and nature photography.

**SILVER MOUNTAIN  
VINEYARDS**

*Summit Sisters*

**Join us on May 30!**

408.353.2278  
SILVERMTN.COM

**UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP!**

**Summit Veterinary Hospital**  
www.summitvethospital.com

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

Dr. Zibae, DVM

# community

Surfnet

## Closing the Digital Divide Creates a Better Community

Ken Nye

Since Surfnet was founded, our focus has been to provide local, reliable internet to residents and businesses in the Santa Cruz Mountains. For years, Surfnet has bridged the technology gap for thousands of customers by delivering wireless internet service. Our efforts took a big step forward in 2024, when we won grants from the state of California to build a new high-speed, fiber-internet network in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Our commitment to bridging the digital divide is the driving factor behind Surfnet's innovation, service, and actions. Here are some benefits when high-speed internet is available to more homes and businesses.

Cash isn't king these days. Card payments, tap-to-pay, wireless transactions, and online payments are the way of the world. A faster fiber-internet connection means smoother operations and faster transactions for business owners and customers.

Today's workplace is often at home. Remote workers and small-business owners need reliable, high-speed internet connections for video conferencing, graphics-heavy email files, and more.

The era of remote learning is here, but it's only viable with a reliable internet connection. Students rely on the internet to access classrooms and resources. A slower connection means dropped video calls and slower browsing speeds while doing research. Bridging the digital divide removes those barriers to education for all students at home, creating more equity in our community.

Weather is becoming less predictable and, at times, more destructive. It's imperative to have a reliable way to access information and receive time-sensitive alerts from Santa Cruz County (CruzAware) and Santa Clara County (Alert SCC). These important programs share warnings and alerts with residents in real-time through phone calls, text messages and emails. They depend on reliable internet service. It brings me, and the rest of the Surfnet team, a lot of pride to know our work plays a role in a safer community.

The infrastructure we are installing today will stay viable for years to come. This will



allow our community to learn faster, do business better, and rest easier.

Residents and business owners interested in fiber availability can visit Surfnet's website 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.

**Wireless & Fiber Internet  
for the Santa Cruz Mountains**

**Fast | Reliable | Local**

**831.439.7873**  
**Surfnetc.com**

**surfnet**  
Communications

**When the Leak Hits the Fan**  
**Disaster-Proofing Your Home**  
Keith Kanady

Let's be honest: many of us think of disaster readiness as stuffing a flashlight and a granola bar into the back of a junk drawer. Actually, your home deserves a little more care when it comes to preparing for the unexpected. Whether it's a storm, an earthquake, or the time your child accidentally flooded the laundry room, being ready can turn chaos into just a mildly inconvenient day.

**The Great Water Escape.** Plumbing disasters always seem to happen at the worst possible moment. One minute, you're enjoying your morning coffee, and the next, your kitchen looks like an audition tape for *Titanic*. Know where your water shut-off valve is, and practice using it. Nothing says "disaster-ready" like being able to stop a gushing flow of water before it soaks into your hardwood floors. You might also consider investing in a leak detector. It's a small gadget that alerts you when water starts sneaking around where it shouldn't.

**When the Ground Gets Groovy.** Living in earthquake territory, we've got two choices: strap it down or watch it dance. Secure bookshelves, televisions, and other heavy furniture to your walls. Your antique armoire may look great in the living room, but it's less charming when it's dancing across the floor. Stash enough food, water, (and chocolate) to last at least three days. Keep some sturdy shoes under your bed, because you don't want to crawl through a minefield of Legos barefoot. Trust me.

**The Wind Beneath Your Shingles.** Windstorms have a knack for turning patio furniture into high-speed projectiles. Secure outdoor items like trash bins and lawn chairs. Check your roof to make sure all shingles are snug. Nobody wants an impromptu skylight.

**Power Outages.** A portable phone charger is a must-have for staying connected, and a stash of LED lanterns will keep you from tripping over the dog in the dark. Backup batteries are also a great tool. One more tip: Be sure you know how to manually open your garage door when the power is out.

We can't predict every curveball life throws at us, but being prepared can make all the difference. Stock up on supplies, secure your home, and remember: when disaster strikes, it's not the end of the world. It's just another chapter in your homeowner adventure.

**Keith Kanady is a Broker Associate with  
Compass in Los Gatos.**

**Community Emergency Response Team**  
**New Class**  
Lila Jones

Do you want to learn more about being prepared for the next disaster? The next Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) class is coming to Loma Prieta Elementary School in May. The series of classes will be held on two **Tuesdays, May 5 and 12**, from 6 to 9:30 p.m., and two **Saturdays, May 9 and 16**, from 9 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. The sessions are a combination of lecture, discussion, and hands-on skills practice.

The curriculum covers disaster preparedness, incident-command-structure organization and local activation, post-disaster assessments, basic first aid, triage and head-to-toe assessments, fire and utility safety, disaster psychology, search and rescue, communications, and terrorism.

This training can help you better prepare for a disaster for your family, your neighborhood, or the mountain community at large. Firewise Communities benefit by having community members become CERT-trained to gain a deeper knowledge of what to do in the event of an emergency.

Space is limited, so sign up now to reserve your spot and free CERT backpack filled with safety gear, medical supplies, a curriculum binder, and more. Sign up at [signupgenius.com/go/2026BasicLPMay](http://signupgenius.com/go/2026BasicLPMay). If you have any questions, call 408-313-5988 or email [lpcert.teamlead@gmail.com](mailto:lpcert.teamlead@gmail.com).

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## Bringing the World to Our Mountain Cultural Exchange Angela Wuerz

Our mountain community has always been known for its welcoming spirit and strong sense of connection. One way families can experience that spirit on a global level is through cultural exchange.

The Cultural Care Au Pair program brings young adults ages 18 to 26 to the United States on a cultural-exchange visa and live with American host families for a year, sometimes longer. During that time, they help with childcare while becoming part of the family's daily life. In return, they gain firsthand experience of American culture, improve their English, and build meaningful relationships that often last well beyond their stay.

For many families, hosting an au pair becomes much more than a childcare arrangement. Children gain exposure to new languages, traditions, and perspectives from around the world. Families often enjoy sharing their own customs while learning about another culture in return. It's not uncommon for these relationships to grow into lifelong friendships, with families staying in touch or visiting one another years later.

Behind the scenes, the program is supported by local childcare consultants, who guide and support host families and au pairs. In our area, we are fortunate to have strong local support in place.

What makes the program truly special are the families who choose to open their homes and share everyday life with someone from another part of the world. Families can bring a global perspective into their home while providing a meaningful experience for a young person from abroad.

Another important aspect of the program



is its commitment to child safety and well-being. The nonprofit Kids First supports initiatives that prioritize the well-being of children and families in the program, and provides additional information and resources. Families interested in learning more about these efforts can visit [www.culturalcarekidsfirst.org](http://www.culturalcarekidsfirst.org).

Our mountain community is a beautiful place to share with someone from another part of the world. Sometimes the most meaningful cultural exchanges begin with something simple: opening the door, sharing a meal, and learning from one another.

To learn more about hosting an au pair or about the broader cultural exchange program, call me at 408-771-5219, email [angela.wuerz@lcc.culturalcare.com](mailto:angela.wuerz@lcc.culturalcare.com), or visit [culturalcare.com/lcc/awuerz](http://culturalcare.com/lcc/awuerz).

### **The Good Drones A Different View from Above Greg Kirkham**

In recent years, drones have become a more common sight over the Santa Cruz Mountains. For some, that brings concerns related to privacy, noise, and how the technology is being used. Those are important considerations. But there is another side to the story that deserves equal attention: the quiet, practical ways that drones can be helpful.

In search and rescue, drones have become a valuable tool for first-responders. When someone is missing in rugged or heavily wooded terrain, an aerial perspective can significantly reduce the time it takes to locate them. That improves outcomes and reduces the risk faced by the volunteers and professionals doing the search work.

Closer to home, drones can play a role in wildfire preparedness. From above, it is easier to identify vegetation density, defensible-space gaps, and access challenges that are not always obvious from the ground. For Firewise communities and individual homeowners, this kind of visibility supports more informed decisions before fire season begins.

Local agriculture is beginning to benefit as well. Vineyard managers and small-scale growers use aerial imagery to spot early signs of plant stress from irrigation issues, pests, or soil variability. Instead of reacting after problems are visible, they can take targeted action sooner.

In construction and land management, drones help teams document progress and better understand complex sites. High-resolution maps and 3D models—often referred to as “digital twins”—allow for more accurate tracking, improved coordination, and fewer unnecessary site visits. In the mountains, where terrain and access can be challenging, that added perspective can make a meaningful difference.

Like any tool, the value of drones depends on how they are used, and by whom. Anyone can purchase and fly a drone today, but responsible use requires more than basic flight skills. Professional operators hold an FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot Certificate, carry insurance, and are trained not just to fly, but to collect and interpret data in a way that is accurate, useful, and respects privacy.

For residents and property owners, that distinction matters. Whether the goal is wildfire preparedness, land stewardship, or project documentation, the difference between raw imagery and actionable information is significant. Working with a qualified professional helps ensure that what is captured from the air translates into something meaningful on the ground.

As this technology continues to evolve, the conversation should not just be about where drones are flying, but how they are helping—and how we, as a community, choose to use them responsibly.

**Greg Kirkham is the founder of LoretoGeo, a Santa Cruz Mountains-based drone mapping and photogrammetry company focused on wildfire preparedness, land analysis, and community planning.**

## Childcare you can trust like family

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Contact Angela Wuerz,  
Local Childcare Consultant to  
learn more about the program!



[angela.wuerz@lcc.culturalcare.com](mailto:angela.wuerz@lcc.culturalcare.com)



**Home Hardening**

**Fire Insurance Discounts**

Dave Millman

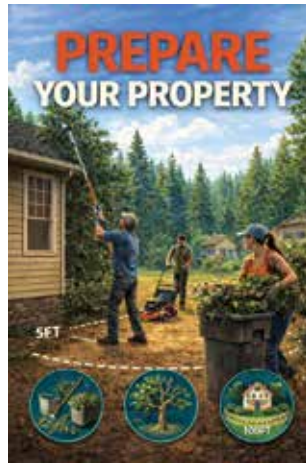
Wildfire risk is a fact of life in the Santa Cruz Mountains, but there is good news for homeowners. Many insurers, including the California FAIR Plan, offer discounts for home-hardening measures that reduce wildfire risk. The keys are knowing how to qualify and document the work properly.

Home hardening doesn't have to be expensive or complicated. When people hear the phrase "home hardening," they often imagine cutting down trees and major construction. In reality, many of the most effective measures are simple and relatively inexpensive. Clearing leaf litter and redwood duff from roofs and gutters, removing combustible debris from decks and near the home, installing metal mesh over attic and crawl space vents, and maintaining a five-foot non-combustible zone around the house can significantly reduce wildfire risk. These are the most basic home-hardening activities to qualify for discounts from any insurer.

**Talk to your insurance broker.** Before beginning a home-hardening project, contact your insurance broker. Every company has its own set of qualifying measures and documentation requirements. Your broker can explain which improvements will result in a discount on your policy.

Many homeowners are surprised to learn that they may already qualify for some discounts. Basic maintenance items, such as clearing vegetation close to the house or removing combustible materials from gutters and decks, may qualify for immediate discounts. Other improvements may take more planning or investment. Moving combustible structures like woodsheds, replacing older vents with ember-resistant designs, or upgrading roofing materials may qualify for additional discounts. The process can be incremental: start with the easy items and add more improvements over time.

**Documentation is key.** One of the most common reasons insurers reject discount applications is incomplete documentation. Insurance companies typically require clear evidence that the qualifying work has been completed to their specifications.



The best approach is to thoroughly document your improvements. Take multiple photos of each item on their list. Include close-up photos of vents, gutters, roofing materials, defensible-space zones, and deck areas. Write clear descriptions of the work performed for each requested discount. Provide the information in the format they request. Submissions that follow the insurer's checklist are far more likely to be processed quickly and approved.

Instead of trying to navigate the work themselves, some homeowners choose to work with a Certified Wildfire Mitigation Specialist. These professionals can evaluate the property, recommend improvements, and prepare a structured report documenting the condition of the home and property. A professionally prepared assessment can make the process smoother for both the homeowner and the insurance company. It can help ensure that all qualifying improvements are properly documented.

In our wildfire-prone community, home hardening provides two important benefits: reducing the risk of wildfire damage and helping homeowners qualify for insurance discounts. With the right improvements—and the right documentation—you may be able to lower both your risk and your insurance costs.

For more information, call 408-256-3796.

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# community

## Lago Lomita Vineyards Bottling Season Robin Porter

We are already planning for next year's harvest in the vineyard, so it's time to bottle the wine that's been aging in barrels in our barrel room. Bottling equipment is very expensive, so most small wine producers use a bottling service. This doesn't mean we lug barrels down to a warehouse. Here in the mountains, the bottlers come to us.

A winemaker usually consolidates all the barrels of one type of wine into a single tank before the bottler gets to the winery. The output of that tank is a long hose that can exit the barrel room and reach outside. The bottler parks a semi-truck where it can hook up to the hose. The winemaker connects the hose from the tank to the semi, and the fun begins.

On one end of the truck is a conveyor that takes in empty, clean bottles. We order bottles well in advance after considering how much of each type of wine is in our barrels. Each wine has a traditional bottle shape.



Standing on the receiving end of the semi-truck, we place empty bottles on the conveyor. The conveyor moves this stream of bottles up to the first station. The wine is pumped out of the tank, down the hose, into the semi, and into the bottle. After the bottle is filled, it advances to the corking station.

Corks are special, too. There are different grades of natural cork or synthetic cork, and you need to be sure that the corks are correctly sized for the bottles. The corking station is pretty self-explanatory, but there are variables, like the amount of pressure needed to insert the cork. Foil is applied after corking, then the bottles advance to the labelling station.

Labels can be complicated. The government requires review and sign-off on all label designs. Once approved, they go to

a printer and we finalize colors, graphics, label shape and size, and adhesives. The cut labels are put onto a reel of label tape that is loaded into the bottling truck. As each label is spun onto the bottle, a counter is incremented. The counter is the official count of how many bottles are filled, corked, and labelled. The official count is signed off by the bottling company and the winemaker. This is sent to the government as a record of what wine was bottled, for tax purposes. Wine production is highly controlled and regulated.

As the filled, corked, and labelled bottles exit this station, we take each one off the conveyor and load it into empty case boxes. When each box is full, we tape and label it. The boxes are stacked on a pallet and eventually loaded back into the barrel room or stock room for storage. The empty barrels are cleaned, sanitized, and made ready to be filled with this upcoming year's harvest.

Watch out for the large bottling trucks on our mountain roads this time of year.



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Sharing the Spirit of Africa

Suzanne Suwanda



When Pigs Fly  
Artwork by Adelaide Davis

Adelaide Davis  
Kathy McKinney

Mountain resident Adelaide Davis, a junior at Los Gatos High School, was selected for the 2026 ArtNow Exhibition at the New Museum of Los Gatos. Adelaide attended Lakeside Elementary and C.T. English Middle schools.

Selected from more than 600 submissions from 53 high schools across Santa Clara County, students responded to the theme “Before/Between/Beyond,” encouraging an exploration of identity, transformation, and the power of personal and collective narratives.



Inspired by a surrealist assignment in LGHS art teacher Mark Yanowsky’s class, Adelaide’s painting brings imaginative characters to life within a whimsical, dreamlike world.

She shared, “My piece was supposed to be a surrealist artwork that related to the past, present, and future (before, between, and beyond) of society. The idea I came up with was essentially that in the future of society, humans would suffer from the karma of mass consumption. In retaliation, fish could take over over the world (and fish people). The title, *When Pigs Fly*, signifies that this is not a likely future.

“My art teacher at LGHS, Mr. Yanowsky, has been a big support throughout my art journey. He always encourages me to create art as abnormally as I desire, which is awesome.”

Our mountains are rich with unique landscapes, history, and people. One of those people is Folake (pronounced Foe-lah-kay) Phillips, an inspiring visionary sharing the rich culture of Nigeria and other African nations with our community. She is organizing an Africa Day event in Los Gatos on **Saturday, May 23**. More information is on page 6.

A Lexington School classroom volunteer, Folake was recently named Assembly District 28’s Woman of the Year by Assemblywoman Gail Pellerin.

Phillips is the founder of the Awo Center, a non-profit organization that strives to “achieve a more inclusive and representative world by focusing on the unheard stories of individuals within society to build a more collective understanding about ourselves.” She also founded Afriiacionado, an organization that celebrates African culture and heritage with social engagement and events.

These events include Africa Day celebrations in Sacramento, Los Gatos, and San Jose. Folake also organizes a weekly drumming circle, every Sunday at 2 p.m., in Town Plaza Park in downtown Los Gatos. Everyone is invited to join, play, and connect. She also finds time to volunteer at Fofafela, a Nigerian restaurant in San Jose.

A recent chat with Folake opened a refreshing window of vision and hope. “We want people to see a colorful world, not be colorblind, and to experience all the possibilities that come with that,” she said. “That would be knowledge sharing, equal exchange of information, opportunity to share perspectives, and address implicit bias.”

She spent much of her childhood in Nigeria. She travelled extensively in Europe and attended college in England. Her father attended colonial schools and participated in ice hockey, a sport she still loves to watch.

“I found when I migrated (to the United States) how very siloed people were, the opposite of how I grew up,” she continued. “I turned that into a strength,” she said.

She founded her non-profits in 2020, inspired by the murder of George Floyd and the global protests for Black Lives Matter. Her mission at that time was to share, amplify, and celebrate the unheard stories of diverse individuals, youth and families using arts, culture, technology, nature, and environment. She advocates for accurate culture narratives and promotes equity, self-sufficiency, and holistic well-being.

Folake is an active participant in arts education in schools, promoting nature and environmental stewardship education. Her program for integrated mental health and wellness includes picking invasive plants, gathering for breathing techniques, then snacks, conversation, and sharing. Lexington School students have learned from her contributions to International Drumming Week and a program to help them understand and appreciate Kwanzaa. She partners with other groups such as

Grassroots Ecology and San Jose Conservation Corps, organizing summer internships for some of their students, among many other community activities.

“We do a lot of things that interconnect color, class, and culture,” she said. “There is only one race, the human race, different from what is imbedded in the American system,” she noted.

“Our strength is our diversity,” she said. “What can we do with that strength when we harness and use it to its fullest form and use it as a people?” she smiled.





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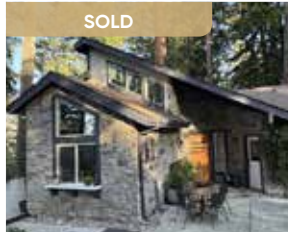
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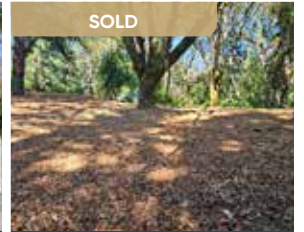
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# calendar

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### Saturday, May 2

Goodwill donation drive is from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Lakeside School.

### Sunday, May 3

95033 Flea Market at the Building Blocks parking lot, 23845 Summit Road, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Lauren Jelencovich performs at the Los Gatos High School Theatre. Doors open at 2 p.m., and the concert begins at 2:30 p.m. Visit [lgcca.org](http://lgcca.org).

Mountain School's annual May Day celebration is from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 19621 Black Road

### Thursday, May 7

Learn about the history of Nisene Marks State Park at a free Loma Prieta Museum history event, from 7 to 9 p.m., at the Loma Prieta School Forum, 23800 Summit Road.

### Friday to Sunday, May 8 through 10

Sudden Oak Death Blitz. More information is at [www.sodblitz.org](http://www.sodblitz.org).

### Saturday, May 9

Loma Prieta Museum hosts a guided tour of Nisene Marks State Park and the site of the Lost Town of Loma Prieta, from 9 a.m. to noon. Register at [www.LomaPrietaMuseum.org](http://www.LomaPrietaMuseum.org).

### Thursday, May 14

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.

### Thursday and Friday, May 14 and 15

In-person auditions for Theatre in the Mountains summer talent show. [Theatreinthemountains.com](http://Theatreinthemountains.com).

### Saturday, May 16

The Santa Cruz County History Fair is from noon to 4 p.m., at the London Nelson Community Center, 301 Center Street in Santa Cruz.

### Sunday, May 17

LPEF's annual Sip 4 Schools event is from noon to 5 p.m., at the Wrights Station Vineyard and Winery. Learn more at [LPEF.org](http://LPEF.org).

### Friday, May 22

In-person auditions for Theatre in the Mountains summer talent show. [Theatreinthemountains.com](http://Theatreinthemountains.com).

### Saturday, May 23

South Skyline Fire and Rescue holds its annual pancake breakfast from 8 to 11 a.m., at the Saratoga Summit CalFire Station, 12900 Skyline Boulevard. More information is at [southskylinefire.org](http://southskylinefire.org).

Celebrate African heritage and learn about the cultures, history, and contributions of African people across the world. Africa Day will be from 4 to 8 p.m., at the JCC in Los Gatos, 14855 Oka Road. Tickets and more information are at [africionado.org](http://africionado.org).

LPEF hosts a Stanford Blood Drive from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in the Community Center Room at the Mountain Community Complex, 23845 Summit Road. Visit [sbcdonor.org](http://sbcdonor.org).

### Thursday, May 28

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, May 30

The Summit Sisters perform at Silver Mountain Winery, from 1 to 4 p.m.

## 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 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.

Mountain Farmers Market from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m., on the Loma Prieta Playfield.

### 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.



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 Neil Wiley

One hour's drive from our mountains takes you to Midpen's Purisima Creek Redwoods' 24 miles of trail. I think you'll find it worth the trip. It is a scenic adventure.

Your journey begins with a short drive north on Highway 17, but it gets better. You turn up Black Road. It is narrow with lots of curves, and as you near the top, no matter how slow you go, you think you are going too fast. Reaching Skyline Boulevard (Highway 35) is a joyful achievement. (You could go via Saratoga's Highway 9, but you would miss a beautiful section of Skyline Boulevard, including Castle Rock State Park.)

Many of Midpen's 27 preserves are accessible from Skyline. You can review them all on-line at Midpen's openspace.org.

**North Ridge Parking** is at the very end of this preserve parade. It offers 41 car spaces and 23 ADA slots. It is conveniently located near the North Ridge Trailhead and access to the Whittemore Gulch and Harkins Ridge trails. You can see the parking lot on the left



side of Highway 35 about eight miles from the intersection with Highway 84 and Alice's Restaurant.

**Redwood Roadside Parking** is available near the Purisima's Redwood Trailhead, about six miles from Highway 84 and

Alice's Restaurant. It has only 11 spaces and two ADA slots. If you can find a space, this is a good place to park while visiting the Redwood Trail. This trail has a several tables along a shady path. It is a good place for a short walk or picnic, but if you want to see



more scenery the north entrance offers more opportunities.

**Purisima Creek Road Parking** is located on the ocean side of the preserve. Unfortunately, it has only seven spaces and one ADA slot. I parked there once to meet up with a group of photographers. Although we enjoyed taking nature photos in a cool, shady environment, parking was difficult.

From this entrance, you can take the Whittemore Gulch or Harkins Ridge trails to North Ridge, or the Purisima Creek Trail across the entire preserve to the Redwood entrance on Highway 35.

The North Ridge Trail offers more variety with tall trees, green meadows, and sunny views of mountains, a huge valley, the ocean, and big skies. Although it is a dead-end trail, it offers dramatic views while avoiding long, flat treks.

If you like variety, you can turn at a crossing from North Ridge to Whittemore Gulch. (Turn at the fence.) This trail takes you all the way to the park's west end near the ocean. It is a long trail with interesting variations in environment.

For my trip, I enjoyed the North Ridge Trail. When I reached my perch on a North Ridge cliff, I saw across the valley to miles of beautiful scenery. It was spectacular!

The experience gave me a lift so I took the Chris Macintosh Trail back to the parking area. It runs parallel to North Ridge, is a little longer, but displays a few extra views, more climbs, and lots of curves. The best part was that I could look down on my fellow hikers.

Good news. Midpen is planning a segment of a 40-mile trail that will link the California Coast Trail and the Bay Area Ridge Trail. If you like walking, you could travel from the Pacific Ocean over ridges, through canyons, under shady forests, to the Santa Cruz Mountains. Sign me up!



*More open space preserves north of Highway 84*

## Logging in the Augmentation Debra Staab

In 1776, the Anza expedition brought Spanish colonists and settlers to our area. When Napoleon Bonaparte toppled the Spanish Crown in 1808, Spain's hold on its colonies diminished. Within a decade, insurgents fought royal forces in the Mexican War of Independence. The federal republic of Mexico was codified in 1824.

The new Mexican government offered large land grants to build up the area. Within the Aptos Creek watershed, three grants were distributed. They included 6,700 acres at Rancho Aptos to Rafael Castro and 1,700 acres at Rancho Soquel to Martina Maria Castro in 1833. Martina was granted another 35,000 acres at Soquel Augmentation in 1844. Both Martina and Rafael were children of Joaquin Castro, a Spanish soldier and descendent of the Spanish Castile line.

Initially, the Spanish settlers did not recognize the immense value of redwood trees as building material. They had always constructed their homes from adobe bricks, which they made themselves. Wood was only used for roof beams. However, by 1832 the secret was out and Rafael Castro installed one of the first saw pits in the area. At the time, trees were harvested primarily for personal use.

Today, some 60 percent of the Aptos Creek watershed lies within The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park. Most of the remaining watershed lies in the Soquel State Demonstration Forest. It is protected through a highly controlled harvesting plan.

After the eras when Native Americans enjoyed and cared for the Aptos Creek area, and the Spanish and Mexicans took only what they needed, the region endured significant destruction. The prospective value of harvesting redwood for commercial purposes was intoxicating to American and European pioneers as they arrived in the Santa Cruz Mountains starting in the 1840s. Dozens of lumber barons clear-cut the giants for profit, especially between 1852 and 1942.

**Early Logging.** The process of logging redwoods is not as simple as felling a sapling with an axe. Taking down a 10- to 20-foot-diameter tree standing 200 feet tall took significant planning and careful action. A year or two before logging began, a cruiser would locate and mark specific trees to be

cut down. Some were tagged for shingles and shakes. Lower-quality trees were marked for lumber.

The person who did the felling was called a timber faller or chopper. They had to calculate exactly where to cut the tree and then clear the area where the tree would land. If they made any mistakes, the tree could shatter when it fell. Prior to felling, peelers would remove the bark from nearby tan oaks in case the redwood fall damaged the oak trees. It could take three to four days to fell a large tree.

Fallen trees were then cut into rough segments by buckers and their bark peeled by peelers. Some of the first logging sites popped up in the 1840s near creek beds, where the trees were easily accessible and the roughly cut logs could be floated to the mill for further processing. These easy pickings were soon exhausted, and lumbermen were forced to use other tactics for moving the logs.

Their next solution for getting the logs to the mills was to bring in horses, mules, and oxen. It was a significant effort to train the animals, but their strength lent invaluable support to the process. To assist the animals, skid roads were built by placing horizontal wooden strips along a trail at regular intervals. The teams were able to haul as much as 600 tons of logs containing about 57,000 board feet of lumber.

As the demand for redwood rose, so did logging innovations. By the 1880s, the first steam donkey was installed. This device used steam from a wood-burning boiler. When the machine was fired up, drums and cables pulled the logs along the ground or overhead on cables. The downside was that hundreds of gallons of water were needed to complete a



single logging operation. Nonetheless, along with oxen, steam donkeys were an essential piece of equipment for hauling logs in the Santa Cruz Mountains from the 1880s to the 1930s.

**Early Milling.** Milling methods also evolved. The earliest process was pit sawing. It involved two men, a long straight whipsaw, and a deep enough pit to allow one man to stand under a log laid across the pit opening. Another stood at the top.

Pit sawing soon gave way to ratchet frames that moved back and forth under a mechanical saw until the entire log was sliced into board sized pieces. To increase output, some mills installed multiple saws working simultaneously. These were called gang mills. Later, the frames were replaced by bearings in a setup known as a muley saw.

One of the greatest advances in milling arrived with the invention of the steam engine. This allowed mills to be built anywhere, not just near a flowing waterway.

The next invention was the circular saw. Two circular saws, one at the top and the other at the bottom, were used to slice through larger logs. The invention increased output and reduced costs. By 1882, circular



Steam donkey



saws were used by 95 percent of lumber mills along the California coast.

Another invention was the bandsaw. The machinery was expensive, so only the largest mills used them.

Other wood products the mills generated were called splitstuff. This included grape stakes, pickets, fence and corral posts, railroad cross ties, cordwood, and rough-cut fire wood. The volume of splitstuff exceeded the amount of board lumber produced in the Santa Cruz Mountains and represented nearly half of all wood cut.

**Moving the Mills.** By default, lumber mill sites were in the forest near the trees being logged. Once a stand was depleted, which could take years, the mill operators moved their equipment to the next group of trees to be felled. Each mill was constructed with timber, boards, and shakes cut on the spot or carried from a previous mill. Even tramway and railroad tracks were moved.

The one part of a milling business that could not be moved was the millpond, a small body of water created by damming a nearby watercourse. The pond served to soak, sort, and store logs prior to cutting them into board feet.

**Moving Lumber to Market.** Milled wood was stored in a lumberyard and sorted and stacked by grade and size. A lumberjack used

a jack to form the large stacks of cut boards.

Before any railroads were built through the Santa Cruz Mountains, horse-drawn wagons were used to move wood to market. A lumber wagon with a trailer pulled by teams of eight or more horses could haul up to 4000 board feet of lumber. The wobbly load made for a difficult balancing act.

Moving lumber by rail was more efficient. By the time the railroad left the Santa Cruz Mountains, gasoline-powered trucks came in to take their place.

**Loma Prieta Town.** When the Loma Prieta Lumber Company first moved into the Aptos Creek area, construction crews built crude housing and a spring-fed water tank. A few years later, in 1886, the town footprint expanded. Soon there was a general store, business office, post office, Wells Fargo Express station, telegraph office, train depot, saloon, dance hall, and a hotel.

Cottages were constructed for the workers and their families. Many had decorative landscaping and running water. Most of the 36 cottages were located on the east bank of Aptos Creek.

On the west bank of the creek, three more buildings were established. One was for the company president to use when he visited, and one became the summer home of the company secretary. The third structure was a company meeting hall and guest lodge for visiting directors. The Loma Prieta School District was formed and a schoolhouse was constructed. Additional water sources were developed with springs and wells.

After a destructive storm in 1899 that damaged the railroad, the town of Loma Prieta fell into decline. In 1901, the company moved its offices to San Francisco and Capitola. A year later, the post office and school closed, and commercial access by rail was abandoned. The location continued as a freight stop until the 1920s.

**The Lumber Companies.** The Loma Prieta Railroad, a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific

Railroad, was incorporated in 1882. The same day, the Watsonville Mill and Lumber Company announced plans to log in the Aptos Creek area. The two companies worked together to reach their goals.

In early 1883, representatives of the Watsonville Mill and Lumber Company purchased 6,845 acres around Aptos Creek, Bridge Creek, and Hinckley Creek from Martina Castro's daughter. Here, they created the Loma Prieta Lumber Company to harvest the hard-to-reach redwood stands in the area. For their enterprise to be successful, they needed a rail line that ran through the property. The Southern Pacific Railroad agreed to finance construction of the Loma Prieta Railroad, including a seven-mile stretch into the Aptos Creek watershed as well as several spurs to reach multiple mill sites. The cost was estimated at \$50,000 per mile.

The Loma Prieta Lumber Company opened its doors in 1884 and connected by rail to two other nearby mill sites, Molino and Monte Vista. At its peak, the company employed over 200 men and 80 contractors who were paid an average rate of \$2.25 per day plus board. The entire operation was the largest of its time. The mills produced as much as 70,000 board feet of lumber in an 11-hour workday.

To accomplish this level of output, the Monte Vista mill used two 50-foot long band saws and multiple circular saws. A devastating fire destroyed the Monte Vista Mill in 1885. The owners built back a smaller operation at the site, and erected a new facility at Pajaro near an existing rail line. In 1886, the company expanded operations near the Molina site with another bridge, millpond, rail spurs, and a new mill.

The new Monte Vista mill included worker cottages, a store, company offices and living quarters, a Wells Fargo Express, and a telegraph office. Tourist accommodations included a campground, picnic area, a small



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saloon and hotel, and a dance pavilion.

The post-Civil War economy fell into recession in 1893. Milling operations shut down from 1892 to 1893 to allow for equipment upgrades. With construction stalled and a backlogged inventory, the company considered their options.

In 1894, the owners merged with the F.A. Hihn Company, that was logging near Valencia Creek. The combined firm was called the Santa Cruz Lumber Company. Storm damage in 1899 prevented the Santa Cruz Lumber Company from turning a profit and it dissolved not long after the storm. Both the F.A. Hihn and the Loma Prieta Lumber Company divided their assets and continued separately.

In 1900, the Loma Prieta Lumber Company shifted their logging efforts to Hinckley Gulch and wound down their operations on Aptos Creek. A massive storm destroyed the mill at Hinckley Gulch in early 1906. The 1906 earthquake just a few months later caused significant damage throughout the area. Operations were paused briefly.

The 1906 earthquake spurred a need for lumber as towns started to rebuild, especially in San Francisco. In 1908, the Loma Prieta Lumber Company decided to pull the logs from Hinckley Gulch to the former Loma Prieta site and reestablish milling operations there. At that time, the site was no longer a town, but rail service was still available for hauling lumber to market. From 1910 to 1915 a subsidiary of the Loma Prieta Lumber Company, the Molino Timber Company, operated the mill at Loma Prieta.

In 1915, the operations at Loma Prieta were completely dismantled, including the millpond. Plans to rebuild rose again in 1917, when the Loma Prieta Lumber Company regained ownership of the land surrounding Loma Prieta. Once more the company rebuilt its mill with a plan to process timber from Bridge Creek. Unfortunately, another destructive storm struck the area just one

year later which wiped out the Bridge Creek infrastructure. The Loma Prieta Lumber Company set its sights on Big Tree Gulch.

The Big Tree Gulch operation turned out to be difficult and limited. The last full season of harvesting was in 1920. The Aptos Creek mill was permanently shut down in 1922. The narrow-gauge line was removed and the company was mortgaged to pay off its debts, that they settled through land sales just five years later. By the end of 1924, the Loma Prieta Lumber Company had produced an astonishing 140 million board feet of redwood. The Loma Prieta Branch of the Southern Pacific Railroad ceased operations in 1925.

Between the 1920s and 1940s, the Loma Prieta Lumber Company continued small timber operations in the Aptos Creek watershed through leases and other contracts. Lawrence Cusack launched two mills near Buzzard's Lagoon to harvest some of the larger trees that had been left. He ran operations there from 1936 into the 1940s.

In 1942, large-scale logging came to an end in the Augmentation after some 22,529 acres were cut. Over 800 million board feet of lumber was harvested and cut into timber products between 1865 and 1942.

In 1948, Union Oil searched for petroleum in the Santa Cruz Mountains near Sand Point and White's Lagoon. They drilled two exploratory wells but never found enough oil. This piqued the interest of the Marks family.

**Forest Preservation.** Some people took note of the extensive destruction caused by over-logging and started talking about conservation. Congress established the United States Forest Service in 1897.

Nissen and Benjamin Marks moved to Salinas in the mid-1880s as farmers. They had four children: Alice, Agnes, Herman, and Andrew. Benjamin died in 1893 and Alice in 1942. Nissen and her children had an interest in nature and started buying land in the Augmentation. Her

son Herman hoped they would find oil. By 1954, the Marks family owned 9,970 acres in the mountains above Aptos, that formerly belonged to the Loma Prieta Lumber Company. Nissen Marks died in 1955.

In 1957, Herman Marks conducted exploratory oil drilling near Aptos Creek, probably between Molina and the Porter house. No significant amounts of oil were located. As the family debts rose, they looked for alternatives. In 1961, the Marks family offered to sell their land to the California State Parks for just over \$400,000. The state rejected the offer due to lack of funds.

In 1959, the Nature Conservancy was established as a non-profit in California. After the land sale to the state fell through, Herman Marks made a pitch to the non-profit to create a public park. In 1962, the Nature Conservancy purchased over 9,000 acres to preserve the site. They named the park after the family matriarch, but spelled it in what her children thought was the easiest format, Nisene Marks.

In June of 1965, after a bond measure to create a new state park passed, the State of California acquired the land deed from the Nature Conservancy. They paid about \$625,000 to pay off the non-profit's debt. The Marks children donated additional parcels to make the total acreage 9,815 acres. The land became Forest of Nisene Marks State Park.

In the 1970s, a 2,700 acre parcel adjacent to and north of the Forest of Nisene Marks was logged by several companies including Pelican Timber Company. Pelican ran into financial difficulties and agreed to a debt-for-nature land swap with the State of California and the Bank of America. This deal led to the creation of the Soquel Demonstration State Forest (SDSF) in 1988. The forest was managed by the Nature Conservancy until it was transferred to Cal Fire in 1990.

The Forest of Nisene Marks continues to protect the redwood forests of the our mountains.



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## A New Twist on Mini Golf Urban Putt

Kathy McKinney

Most of us have putt-ed our way through the tried-and-true holes of a mini-golf course, like windmills and loop-dee-loops. For a different and modern take on miniature golf, we decided to check out Urban Putt in downtown San Jose.

This 18-hole, indoor miniature golf course covers 13,000 square-feet of space. You enter the building into a large mezzanine featuring a modern bar and long, clear tables filled with 1,000 golf balls each. You pick up a ball and your club and enter the course through a cave-like entrance. The course features futuristic and historic themes at each hole. Many are an ode to familiar Silicon Valley landmarks.

You're encouraged, but not required, to purchase a drink at the bar to take with you through the course. (We didn't try their craft cocktails, but they looked pretty fancy...and expensive!)

The holes resemble movie sets more than

typical mini-golf holes. Our favorite holes included a crashed alien spaceship and a re-creation of the nautilus submarine from *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Silicon Valley-themed holes include a quantum-computer time machine, a giant circuit board, Shoreline Amphitheater, and the San Jose Sharks. A three-dimensional mountain range complete with Lick Observatory borders the course. You can putt your way through a hole that pays homage to the Winchester Mystery House. It features heritage wallpaper, a self-playing piano, and mysteriously disappearing holes.

There are short descriptions at many of the landmark holes, explaining the historical significance of each site.

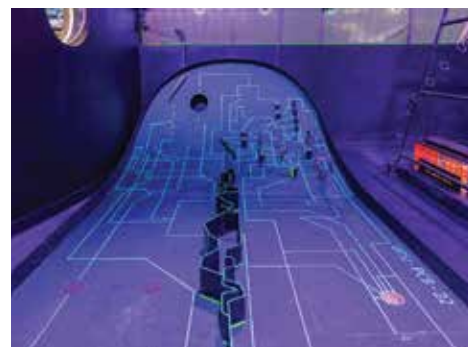
Urban Putt is family-friendly from 4:30 to 8 p.m. When we were there around 7 p.m. on a Friday night, there were many families with children excitedly running through the course, as well as couples and friend groups. After 8 p.m., the venue is only open to guests ages 21 and up.

Urban Putt is open Tuesdays through Sundays. Hours vary, so check their website at [urbanputt.com](http://urbanputt.com) for specifics. For adults, it costs \$11 for nine holes, and \$20 for 18 holes. The prices are \$9 and \$18 for children ages four to 12, and free for children under



age four. We made reservations for a tee time, but they accept walk-ins depending on availability.

Urban Putt is located at 201 S. Second Street in San Jose. We parked at the Park SJ lot at Second and San Carlos Street. The first 90 minutes of parking is free. You can also take Light Rail, from the Winchester Boulevard train station in Campbell. There's a stop along the green route just a short walk from the entrance of Urban Putt.





*Davenport Sea Stack  
Photo by Mercury Freedom*



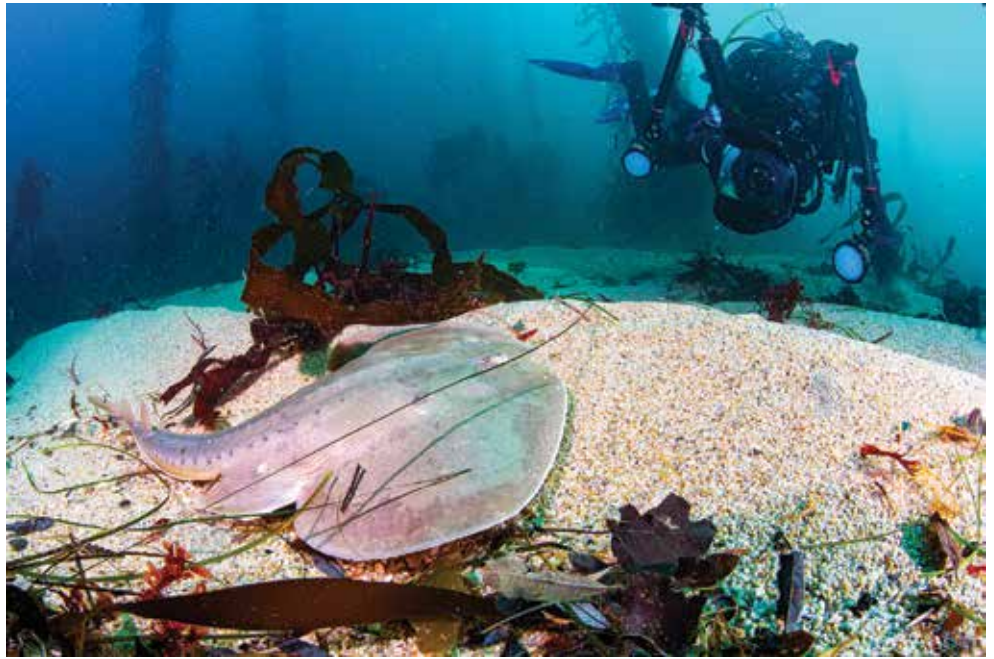
*Anna's and Allen's hummingbirds at the UCSC Arboretum  
Photos by Mercury Freedom*

**Thornback Guitarfish**  
**Bruce Sudweeks**

The Thornback Guitarfish (also known as the California thornback, thornback ray, banjo shark, or shovel nose) is more closely related to electric rays than guitarfish and stingrays.

Elkhorn Slough is a particular hot spot for these creatures, especially during mating season in July and August.

This photo was taken just off Monastery Beach in Carmel.



*Photo by Sandy Mitchell*



**Heads up!**  
**Unseasonably warm spring weather**  
**drove rattlesnakes out of**  
**their winter retreats**  
**early this year.**  
**Look at those buttons!**  
**Photos by Sandy Mitchell**



*Celebrating life in the Santa Cruz Mountains*



**Backyard hummingbirds**  
**Photos by Jenifer Seal-Cramer**  
 page 25

# schools

## Lakeside School News Steve Burrell

Our Lakeside in Wonderland auction was a magical evening. We thank the volunteers who spent countless hours planning and organizing to bring every detail to life. To our staff, thank you for your generous donations and for showing up to support our school community. Our event raised more than \$40,000 for the Lakeside School Community Foundation.

Recently, our campus had an exciting visit from the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department. Deputies engaged the students in meaningful conversations and answered questions about community safety, bike safety, and the important role sheriffs play



in our communities. A highlight of the morning was when students got an up-close look at three motorcycle patrol units and two squad cars on site.

In April, our fifth-grade class enjoyed an adventurous week at science camp. Led by their teacher Kaelyn Hsu, the students spent the week hiking, exploring, and being immersed in nature while participating in hands-on learning. They learned about biology, ecology, and environmental stewardship. Our students danced, sang songs, made s'mores, held animals, and made new friends. They left camp with more confidence, personal responsibility, a greater sense of independence, and a deeper

connection to the natural world.

Enrollment for next year's transitional kindergarten and kindergarten is now open. TK is for children who turn four on or before September 1, 2026. Kindergarten is for children who turn five on or before September 1, 2025.

For more information, visit [lakesidelosgatos.org/services-4-1](http://lakesidelosgatos.org/services-4-1) or stop by our school office.

Dine out at Pizzeria Vittoria in Redwood Estates on **Wednesday, May 20** and support our school. Pizzeria Vittoria will generously donate 10 percent of all sales to the Lakeside School Community Foundation. We hope to see you there!



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**Building Blocks Preschool**

**Our Garden**

Savvy Hillis

Community members have worked together to create something truly magical in our renovated Building Blocks play yard. Today, our garden is more than a collection of beds and pathways. It is a place where children dig, observe, and care for living things. In the process, they develop patience, curiosity, and a deeper connection to the natural world. Our garden stands as a testament to what can grow when a community shares a common purpose.

We are grateful to the individuals who helped bring this vision to life.

Local craftsman and parent Alex Anderson, known as “The Fence Man,” installed an extended fence around the play yard, creating the foundation for what would follow. Play yard designer Sarah Walker donated reclaimed lumber for the first raised beds, giving new life to old materials while creating accessible spaces for planting. Parent Diana Einfal of Nestldown expanded the layout with a custom-milled L-shaped bed, adding both structure and flexibility. Leif Linden contributed another raised bed and lined several with hardware cloth. Briann Preetz,



of Barrel of Dreams, donated barrels for both an apple tree, and a future feature for outside the Building Blocks fenceline.

The garden’s continued success reflects the steady support of local families and businesses. Eric Pellissier of Paradise Dog Boarding, and his wife Courtney, helped build earlier beds and supplied soil and seeds. Check out their cut flower business, Summit Blooms.

Sarah Lockheed and Teacher Jessie are

leading seed-starting efforts, ensuring students experience the full cycle of growth, from planting to harvest. Many of this year’s seeds have been generously donated by local seed company, Renee’s Garden. Teacher Jessie is adding trellises for climbing plants, making the most of the space while opening up new learning opportunities.

As part of the school’s Flagship Legacy Campaign, several donors will have plants and fruit trees named in their honor, a lasting reminder of how generosity helps this garden and community grow. We are truly excited to watch the garden blossom in its first season.

**Thank you to our generous donors:**

Hills Construction, Brett Lay, DDS, Diablo Ink, Redwood Estates Store, Paradise Dog Boarding, Surfnet, Mannat, Mason Tractor, Roo Studio, Quality Pump Service, and Renee’s Garden.

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**DETAILS**

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- RVSP [here](#) or via the QR code by April 24



# schools

## Lexington School News

Jason Deppong

We recently helped organize the third-annual International Baccalaureate Bay Area network “Job-a-Like” gathering. It was hosted by the Silicon Valley International School in Palo Alto. Educators from IB schools in San Jose, Watsonville, Oakland, the East Bay, and San Francisco came to visit classrooms, eat lunch with fellow educators, and gather in small topic-based afternoon sessions.

Two Lexington teachers, Ms. Kajsa and Ms. Kristin, led a session focused on the importance of play in the early years using an IB lens to encourage inquiry. This annual event helps build our local IB community by exchanging ideas and teaching strategies.

The annual Lexington play, written and directed by former Librarian Barbara Lougée and supported this year by Theatre in the Mountains, was a success. Third- through fifth-graders performed for the community and students in the *Not-so-Nasty Tales of the Sisters Grimm*. It was a great experience for our students.

Lexington staff and students showed their appreciation for our many parent volunteers at a volunteer-appreciation breakfast. Parents enjoyed homemade breakfast items made by the teachers. Then, students gathered in the multi-purpose room to perform skits and songs, read poems, and share art to thank parents. Parent volunteers make a huge difference at Lexington. They drive on field trips, support classroom activities, and organize fundraising and community-building events.

One such event is the Lexington Home and School Club’s annual gala fundraiser, held this year at our neighbor’s property. The theme was “Bollywood Meets Hollywood.”



Adults could dress up in the glamorous fashions one might see in either of these two film industries. There was excellent Indian food, a DJ, and a live and silent auction that brought in funds for Lexington’s students. The event could not have happened without many hours of work by our parent volunteers.

Lexington celebrated its third International Drumming Week. San Jose Taiko kicked off the week, teaching students about the power of the drum. On another day, Mike Fair and his partner Jules demonstrated drum rhythms from different parts of Africa. The Singing Marimbas

**Rick Dentoni**  
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If you would like to learn more about Lexington's unique TK-5 IB Primary Years Program, visit our fifth-grade exhibition and open house on **Thursday, May 14**, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Our fifth-graders will introduce their yearlong inquiry projects. Everyone is welcome.

*Photos by Jason Deppong*

**Kids & Company  
Mythical Summer Day Camp  
Bridget Freiri**

If you're looking for something to keep your children busy and active this summer, look no further. Kids & Company's "Mythical Summer" day camp will be open on the Loma Prieta school campus, **June 8 through July 24**. Each week will bring exciting activities, including a fun field trip, swimming, games, crafts, science lessons, and an optional dress-up day. Campers will learn and practice knot-tying, travel skills, and map reading.

Our summer camp program includes time for science, history, and nutrition lessons as well as the 5Rs—readiness, responsibility, resourcefulness, resilience, and reflectiveness. Our child-to-staff ratio is 14:1 on days when the campers remain on campus, and 7:1 on field trip days.

Every family has different needs, so our program is flexible. Your child can enroll for the entire summer, attend only certain weeks, and choose which days to attend. Whether you're looking for weekly enrichment or an occasional adventure, Kids & Company has you covered. Use the QR code for more information or to register. Scholarships are available for those who qualify.



from Santa Cruz performed during lunch while students danced and staff soaked in the fun vibes. James Henry and his partner Ronaldo concluded the week with an amazing presentation using Brazilian- and African-inspired rhythms. It was interactive, enlightening, and a lot of fun.

Lexington students met their fundraising goal for the Wildcat Color Run, Lexington's biggest fundraiser of the year. Their reward was a visit by Kona Ice. Every student enjoyed a cool treat after a week of drumming. It was a great way to kick off spring break.



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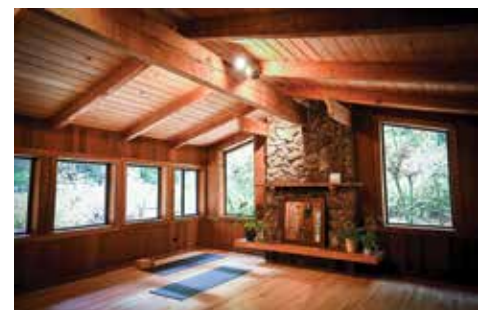
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