

Mission Village VOICE



PLAZA HALL

Back to Futurity

World Champion Andy Holcomb soars through the atmospheric world of Horse Roping

— See page 10

Crop Circles

Tony Correia invades the galaxy of grape crops and local wine offerings

— See page 12

SBHF NEWS

Doctors' Tips for Staying Healthy in 2026

A doctor once said, "You can tell how healthy someone is by what they take two at a time—pills or stairs." It seems the older we get the more likely we are to have a 'day of the week' pill box and take the elevator. But it doesn't have to be this way—the choices you make now have a huge impact on your health with each passing year. How we nourish, stimulate and rejuvenate our minds and bodies greatly affects our quality of health and how well we age. We have a much better chance of staying healthy when our choices are centered around eating wholesome foods, moving our bodies, being balanced, and finding joy & meaning in our lives.

Here's some sage and simple-to-follow advice from SBHF's physicians to help keep you healthy from head to toe in 2026 and beyond:



- Eat an "Eye Healthy" diet since typically what's good for your eyes is good for your body. Avoid direct UV light by wearing sunglasses when outside. Be mindful of your screen time by using the 20-20-20 Rule to relax your eyes & reduce eye strain: Every 20 minutes look 20 feet away for 20 seconds. These tips paired with regular eye exams will help you enjoy clearer, healthier vision all year long.

~Dr. Wilbur, Optometrist



- Brush your teeth twice a day for at least two minutes using a fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristled toothbrush to effectively remove plaque and prevent cavities. Floss daily to clean between your teeth and along the gumline, helping to remove food particles and plaque that brushing alone can't reach. Visit your dentist every 6 months and maintain a balanced diet low in sugary foods & drinks to support overall oral health.

~Dr. Acosta, Dentist



- Vaccine-preventable diseases are now present and on the rise. Vaccination is one of the best things you can do to help protect yourself and your children from serious diseases.

Together we can change this, together we can protect your children!

~Dr. Gomez, Pediatrician

- It's important to know how your breasts normally look and feel and to share any changes with your health care provider. Detecting changes early gives you more options and more control over your health. After age 40, have a mammogram once a year.

~Dr. Ceballos, Family Medicine

- Let's remember that the best way to prevent health problems is through timely screenings. It's important to have an annual physical exam to address all preventive measures based on age and gender, as the saying goes: Prevention is better than cure!

~Dr. Vargas, Family Medicine

- Walking is the easiest and most convenient way to stay physically active. Make sure your socks and shoes fit comfortably to keep your feet happy, especially if you have diabetes. In winter, avoid the coldest time of day to limit respiratory issues.

~Dr. Sotomayor, Family Medicine and Diabetes Specialist



- When you are feeling stressed, turn your attention to your breath. Let your face and shoulder muscles relax and inhale slowly for a count of three, imagining that the breath comes in through the bottom of your feet. Exhale slowly and feel your breath move back down your legs and out through your feet. Do this for at least 3 full breaths.

~Dr. Nathanael Cordero, Family Medicine

Warm wishes for a happy and healthy 2026 from all of us at San Benito Health Foundation!

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A quote for our readers

"There is a river flowing very fast. Those who cling to the shore will feel torn apart. Let go, move to the center, keep your head above water, and look around — these are your companions now. The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves, act with reverence, and celebrate. We are the ones we've been waiting for."

—Hopi prophecy

On the cover

"A Page of Exposure," influenced by Dan Ferah's *The Age of Disclosure*.

Photo illustration by Judith Ougus.



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#BOOKWORM

Braille and Book Clubs

By Leanne Oliveira

"There is a wonder in reading Braille that the sighted will never know: to touch words and have them touch you back." – Jim Fiebig

Happy 2026. This column turns 10 this Summer – and my book club turns 10 this month! Here's to another decade of both. My book club now has almost 20 members, and I run a pretty tight ship because I believe that consistency is key. Ergo, a successful club needs a website to ensure coordination, meets at the same time/day, and titles must be announced at least 1-2 months ahead to allow for waitlists, purchases, etc.

FYI, there are dozens of clubs around SBC. While many are private, others are open to the public since they are typically attached to shops (Crave, the Garden Shoppe, Hills Bookstore, etc.) and libraries. Paicines Ranch is also considering relaunching their club this Spring. Enjoy!

BRaille LITERACY

Happy Braille Literacy Day (1/4) and Month! Did you know that anyone can re-



Leanne Oliveira

quest free materials from the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled? Visit www.loc.gov/nls.

FORGOTTEN BOOKMARKS

South Molton Library in Devon, England collected bookmarks left inside returned books to create a "Museum of Lost Bookmarks." Fun fact: For years, I've also collected bookmarks since I'm primarily in charge of weeding materials that get donated to the Library, the Friends' monthly book sales, and previously ran The Book Nook at Hazel's Thrift Shop for many years.

My favorites are all the old bookstore bookmarks (Waldenbooks, B Dalton, etc.) including Hollister's own "The Bookstore" where I worked in the 1990s and 2000s!

FRIENDS OF THE SBC LIBRARY (HOLISTER)

Our used book sales are closed Dec/Jan, but reopen 2/14 behind the Library 9:00 AM -11:30 AM. Note that resellers are now only allowed to shop during the last 30 minutes of our sales. Bring book donations to our sales or call 831-205-1651 to arrange a



Left: The Braille Collection at the Watsonville Public Library. Right: Bookworms unite! Leanne Oliveira and Andrew Delunas at the 55th Annual Dickens Fair celebrating the many works of author Charles Dickens. Info: www.dickensfair.com



pickup.

HILL'S BOOKSTORE

Check out the website (hillsbookstore.com) for lots of book clubs, Vincentia Schroeter's author visit, 2026 membership tote/plan, and more.

LITERARY HOLIDAYS

Happy Braille Literacy Day (1/4) and

Month, National Science Fiction Day (1/2), "Common Sense" Day, Burns Night (1/25). Birthday Babies: Isaac Asimov (1/2/1920), AA Milne (1/18/1882), and Edgar Allan Poe (1/19/1809).

NEW RELEASES

Enjoy! Visit tinyurl.com/BOOKWORM-JAN26. *(Continued, next page)*

WE NEED YOU!

Join one of our committees!

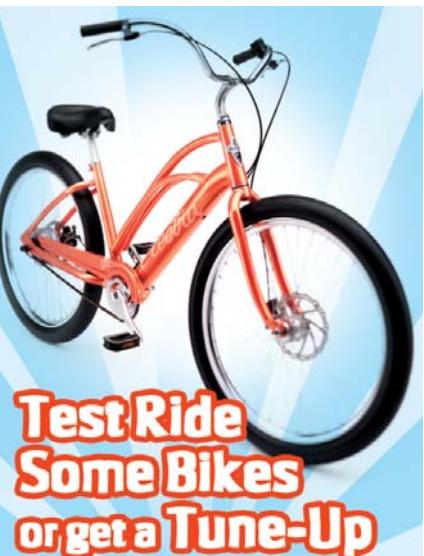
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Language Accessibility Advisory Committee is designed to advise, assist, and provide recommendations to the Elections Department as to how voters with disabilities can independently and privately vote.

JOIN VAAC

Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee is designed to advise and assist the Elections Department with implementing federal and state laws relating to access of the electoral process by low English proficiency (LEP) voters, so that all voters can understand the voting process.

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WATSONVILLE LIBRARY

I work as an on-call Reference Librarian for the City of Watsonville's Public Library which offers multiple stories (pun intended) and thoughtful features like increased disability access, plenty of quiet cubicles and study rooms, a fabulous Braille collection, bottle filling stations at various heights, device charging stations, etc. There are also modern art installations, regularly rotated exhibit spaces (usually by university classes), and classes that assist ALL ages equally. Reminder that ANY RESIDENT of California is eligible for most public library cards across the state.

It's a pretty commute that only takes 30 minutes AND I often get to visit the beach. My favorite spots are our graphic novel collection and our arcade machine which boasts dozens of games including my favorite: Space Invaders. We are currently building an outdoor rooftop lounge with gorgeous views featuring a café, bandstand, AND a community garden. So excited!

Popular WPL programs include After Hours Laser Tag, gaming clubs, a robust group of teen volunteers and teen programming, twice weekly walk-in tech/device help, and plenty more. Recent virtual author visits included Leah Bardugo, Philippa Gregory, and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai. All recordings available at libraryc.org/watsonvillelibrary/archive.

Libraries are made powerful by their patrons; they are simply a reflection of the level of support from their communities. For example, city officials, electives, and local businesses all chipped in to help WPL and residents voted on a bond. If I'm wearing my lanyard or WPL tee around that town, I get stopped –often– and thanked for my service. Marvelous!

Want to support your local library? I recommend consulting your electeds, vote and volunteer accordingly, and honestly consider how much YOU participate in your library's wellbeing. Find out if it has a "Friends" auxiliary group (which are completely separate from a Library and provide fundraising). Take a stand for literacy while investing in the future of your community.

Leanne Oliveira (MLIS, MA History) is a Reference Librarian at the Watsonville Library and is on the Friends of the SBC Library Board. Contact: oldfashionedolive@gmail.com. Leanne is also an alumni of San Benito Leadership Institute, which is always recruiting at <https://linktr.ee/sbleadership>. ■



Over 60 bookworms enjoyed Ken Rand's book launch party for *A Time Like No Other*. Congrats, Ken! Info: www.kenrand.net



A MISSION INVASION — Perhaps these ETs were actually on a mission to spread good cheer in the form of familiar human ballet moves. Have they been studying from afar... or is ballet really the interstellar language we all suspected it to be?

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COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Scholarships available from the Community Foundation

Calling all graduating high school students in San Benito County! An exciting world of opportunity is waiting for you.



Community Foundation
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As a high school senior, you've reached milestones you once dreamed about, and now your journey toward the future begins. Your hard work and dedication have paved the way to higher education, and the Community Foundation does not want financial barriers to stand in your way. We are pleased to announce that scholarship applications for 2026 are opening on January 7th, 2026!

Each scholarship has its own set of criteria, with award amounts ranging from \$500 to \$2,000. Opportunities are available for a wide range of educational paths, including business

administration, culinary arts, nursing, vocational training, and more. Any graduating senior who resides in San Benito County is eligible to apply. This includes students attending Hollister High School, San Andreas High School, Anzar High School, St. Francis High School, Monte Vista Christian School, Palma High School, Notre Dame High School, and other neighboring high schools, as long as the student lives in San Benito County. Some scholarships are school-specific. Please ensure to review application guidelines carefully.

For students attending Hollister High School, all Community Foundation-managed scholarships are available through the school's College and Career Center. Additional information can be found on Hollister High School's website or by contacting the College and Career Specialist, Mary Andrade, at mandrade@sbhsd.k12.ca.us.

While these scholarships provide valuable financial assistance, they are meant to offer much more. They represent recognition of students' achievements, validation of their hard work, and encouragement to continue striving toward their goals. Most importantly, they reflect a community that believes in the potential of its students and is invested in their success.

Students can apply online through the Community Foundation's website at givesanbenito.org/scholarships. ■





Starting this year, Rancho Cielo is excited to partner with the City of Monterey to host the auction at the Monterey Conference Center. The main culinary event will remain in the Portola Hotel & Spa. Photo: Adam Joseph

COMMUNITY

Rancho Cielo's 2026 Culinary Round Up promises a night of flavors and inspiration

By Adam Joseph

On Sunday, February 22, Rancho Cielo will host its 16th Annual Culinary Round Up (CRU) at the Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay—an evening of fun, food and libations with a Western flair, including an exciting raffle and silent and live auctions to benefit the organization's programs.

The highlight of the evening is the unique collaboration between Rancho Cielo's Drummond Culinary Academy (DCA) students and more than two dozen Monterey County's top chefs, who work alongside students to present a strolling dinner comprised of many delicious small plates. But this epicurean event is more than just gourmet food; it's an opportunity for the public to see Rancho Cielo's vocational training in action, meet our students, hear their stories and witness how opportunities like this influence their academic, professional and personal growth.

"It's special because it's all about the students and building them up," said Laura Nicola, DCA Dining Room Manager and Front-of-House Instructor. "Watching the [students] interact with guests and work alongside talented local chefs is my favorite part. It is a great showcase of their dedication, hard work and newfound self-confidence."

Local celebrity chef, longtime Rancho Cielo supporter and co-chair of the Culinary Round

Up committee, Bert Cutino, said, "We always hope the chefs become attached to the students and hire them when they graduate."

Thanks to the support of our community, volunteers, donors, sponsors, wineries, breweries and restaurants, CRU has become one of the Peninsula's most anticipated foodie events of the year.

Visit ranchocieloyc.org for more information, tickets and sponsorship opportunities.



2026 New Year's Day Renewal Hike (Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area)

Join us for our New Year's Day Renewal Hike on Thursday, January 1st, 2026, at 10am in the Nature Area at Hollister Hills SVRA. Start the New Year off on the right foot. This is a family friendly hike for 1.5 miles along an easy to moderate trail (Beck Trail).

Dogs on leash are welcome. The hike program is free, however the normal park entrance fee of \$5 applies. Remember to bring water, layered clothing, sunscreen, and comfortable hiking shoes.

Please contact Hollister.Hills@parks.ca.gov for any questions or call 831-636-2065. The hike will be cancelled with heavy rain. ■



"Ned," the E.T. pilot who crashed in 1897, is buried on this plot in Aurora Cemetery.

DEARLY DENOTED

Aurora's Extraterrestrial Pilot Grave

In the late 19th century, long before flying saucers and Cold War anxieties entered the American imagination, the skies were already stirring unease and wonder. In 1896 and 1897, newspapers across the United States carried reports of mysterious airships—elongated craft equipped with brilliant searchlights—gliding silently over towns from California to Illinois.

The phenomenon reached a dramatic climax in North Texas, where sightings poured in almost nightly and curiosity tipped into alarm.

Just after 6 a.m. on April 17, 1897, the saga reached its most extraordinary moment in the small farming community of Aurora, Texas. According to a detailed report published in the Dallas Morning News, an airship flying unusually low struck the windmill on the property of Judge James Spencer Proctor. The collision produced a violent explosion, scattering wreckage across several acres, destroying the windmill and water tank, and flattening Proctor's carefully tended flower garden. Townspeople rushed to the scene to find twisted debris made of an unfamiliar, silvery metal.

Most astonishing was the discovery of the pilot. Newspaper accounts described him as small, humanoid, and clearly "not an inhabitant of this world." Though badly injured,

he was reportedly carried to a nearby barn, where he died later that day. Papers found on his person—said to be covered in strange hieroglyphs—could not be deciphered. The following afternoon, according to local reports, the pilot was given a Christian burial in Aurora Cemetery.

The story did not end there. Over the decades, residents spoke of odd consequences linked to the crash site: crops that refused to grow, mysterious illnesses, and rumors of military visitors arriving quietly in the aftermath. The pilot's grave was marked by a small headstone that later disappeared, and attempts to exhume the body were blocked by fiercely protective locals.

By the 1970s, metal detector readings suggested that foreign material remained buried at the site—until someone removed it under cover of night.

Skeptics have long argued the incident was an elaborate hoax, a product of late-19th-century imagination and newspaper sensationalism. Yet physical evidence uncovered decades later, including buried windmill struts and metal fragments embedded in a damaged tree, complicates easy dismissal. Researcher Jim Marrs, who lived nearby, interviewed elderly residents who recalled the crash or the removal of wreckage the



UFO investigator Hayden Hewes managed to create this composite drawing of the Little Traveler based on eyewitness accounts. Credit: Findagrave.com

following day.

Today, Aurora openly acknowledges the legend, and locals have named the alien pilot "Ned." A Texas historical marker notes the 1897 airship crash, and the cemetery remains carefully guarded. Whether misunderstood technology, clever fiction, or something truly unexplained, the Aurora airship endures as a uniquely American mystery—one that predates Roswell by half a century and continues to blur the boundary between history and the unknown. ■

CELESTIAL EVENTS

January 3 - Full Moon in Cancer, Supermoon.

The Moon will be located on the opposite side of the Earth as the Sun and its face will be fully illuminated. This phase occurs at 10:04 UTC. This full moon was known by early Native American tribes as the Wolf Moon because this was the time of year when hungry wolf packs howled outside their camps. This moon has also been known as the Old Moon and the Moon After Yule. This is also the first of three supermoons for 2026. The Moon will be near its closest approach to the Earth and may look slightly larger and brighter than usual.

January 3, 4 - Quadrantids Meteor Shower.

The Quadrantids is an above average shower, with up to 40 meteors per hour at its peak. It is thought to be produced by dust grains left behind by an extinct comet known as 2003 EH1, which was discovered in 2003. The shower runs annually from January 1-5. It peaks this year on the night of the 3rd and morning of the 4th. Unfortunately the full moon will obscure all but the brightest meteors this year. But if you are patient, you may still be able to

catch a few of the brighter ones. Best viewing will be from a dark location after midnight. Meteors will radiate from the constellation Bootes, but can appear anywhere in the sky.

January 10 - Jupiter at Opposition. The giant planet will be at its closest approach to Earth and its face will be fully illuminated by the Sun. It will be brighter than any other time of the year and will be visible all night long. This is the best time to view and photograph Jupiter and its moons. A medium-sized telescope should be able to show you some of the details in Jupiter's cloud bands. A good pair of binoculars should allow you to see Jupiter's four largest moons, appearing as bright dots on either side of the planet.



January 18 - New Moon in Capricorn. The Moon will be located on the same side of the Earth as the Sun and will not be visible in the night sky. This phase occurs at 19:53 UTC. This is the best time of the month to observe faint objects such as galaxies and star clusters because there is no moonlight to interfere. ■ *Image: NASA*



WILL COOK FOR WINE

Mushroom Barley Soup

By Chef Liz

It's that time of year again. Holiday festivities are behind us. It's cold outside. Don'tcha just want to curl up with a fuzzy blanket and binge watch Netflix? I do.



For a yummy, quick, easy, healthy, filling and comforting weeknight dinner, this soup checks all the boxes. But it's also just fancy enough to serve as a first course at your next dinner party!

Ingredients

- 1 cup pearl barley
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 small carrots, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 lb. your favorite variety of mushrooms, sliced
- 6 cups low sodium vegetable broth (or use your own stock)
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- salt and pepper to taste

Garnish

- 1 lemon cut into wedges
- Crème fraîche or sour cream
- Fresh thyme leaves

Method

In a large soup pot, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onion, carrot, celery, and garlic, and sauté 5-8 minutes until the onion is translucent and the vegetables have softened. Season with a bit of salt. Add the mushrooms and cook 5 more minutes or until the liquid has evaporated.

Add the broth, tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce, thyme and bay leaf, and bring to a boil. Add the barley, salt and pepper to taste, and reduce the heat to medium low. Simmer at least 30 minutes, stirring occasionally until barley is cooked through.

Remove from heat. Discard the bay leaf and thyme sprigs.

Ladle into bowls and garnish with a dollop of crème fraîche and fresh thyme. Serve with lemon wedges

To make in an InstantPot

Sauté the olive oil and veggies in the olive oil as above until translucent. Add mushrooms and sauté until liquid has evaporated. Add remaining ingredients and secure the lid. Set the Instant Pot to cook for 20 minutes on High Pressure. Allow a natural release of pressure for 10 minutes, then release. Remove thyme sprigs and bay leaf. Serve as instructed above. ■



CHECKING IN WITH CHATBOT

Aliens announced they'd landed on Jupiter, studied it for a week, and left a note: "Too much gas. Reminds us of the trip here." ■ *Image and joke: ChatGPT*

SNIPPETS FROM THE MILLIKEN FILES

San Juan Serenades

From an interview with Estolano Larios:
Submitted by Joe Claus & John Grafton

The following text is courtesy of the Milliken Museum Society, located in Los Banos, CA.

We usually think of serenades being performed for the purpose of wooing beautiful señoritas, but it appears that in San Juan, anyone who had a birthday got serenaded.

"Nothing sounds as sweet as a serenade. One wakes up to sweet sounds. On birthdays everyone was serenaded. On 8 o'clock in the morning is the time for serenades. People always expect you and are prepared with cookies and wine."

The Milliken Museum Society is a non-profit organization that supports the Milliken Museum, a historical museum in Los Banos, CA, located at 905 E Pacheco Blvd. next to Los Banos County Park, founded by local historian Ralph Leroy Milliken.

The museum preserves and promotes the history of the Westside agricultural region, including local Native American history, artifacts from prehistoric species, the impact



of Henry Miller, and the evolution of community life and technology. The Milliken Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 1 PM to 4 PM and offers free admission. ■



IN SEARCH OF SAN JUAN—Are we under surveillance? The truth may be out there... although we can neither confirm nor deny the veracity of this photograph.



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FINANCIAL FOCUS

Join the trend with these New Year resolutions

With the new year around the corner, many people are setting goals for 2026. After months of rising prices on everything from milk to mortgages, money-related resolutions are prominent.

One out of four Americans (27%) plan to make 2026 the year of their financial comeback, according to 2025 research from Edward Jones and Morning Consult. Others will continue with previous goals (21%), start from scratch (20%) or catch up on missed goals (14%).

Here are their top three financial goals and what to consider if you make one or more of these yours.

Boost your income: Get creative with your time and interests. Consider side hustles such as delivery driving, pet sitting or tutoring. Perhaps you can sell things online that you no longer need. And if you traditionally get a refund on your tax return, consider adjusting your withholdings so less is taken from your paychecks.

To indirectly increase your income, cut your expenses. Every dollar saved effectively increases the "income" side of your budget. The biggest categories Americans plan to cut

are restaurants and subscriptions.

Build up savings: Whether you're planning for a vacation or creating an emergency fund, having accessible cash means you're less likely to rely on credit cards. And credit cards can incur interest charges if you don't pay the full amount due every month.

To save for something specific, calculate how much you'll need and by when. Then break it down into monthly targets to help make your goal tangible and achievable.

For an emergency fund, build toward three to six months of living expenses. And remember: an emergency fund is for true emergencies – think medical bills, major auto or furnace repairs, not a TV on sale.

Pay off debt: Every payment brings you closer to a life of financial freedom. Start by listing all your debts and their interest rates. Then choose one of these payoff strategies.

The Avalanche Method: You'll pay off the debt with the highest interest rate first. With that paid, you'll move on to the next highest. This reduces the amount of interest you pay over time, which generally means a lower total cost and often a shorter payoff period.

The Snowball Method: You'll pay off the

card with the lowest balance first, then move to the next smallest balance. This may offer quicker gratification as the number of creditors can dwindle faster.

The Consolidation Method: You may be able to bundle and refinance high interest credit card debts to a 0% bank card for 12 months or longer.

With any of these methods, don't ignore your other debts. You'll still need to pay the minimum balances due on mortgages, auto loans and other credit cards to keep interest

rates and late payment fees from accruing and your credit score from dropping.

Ready to join the trend? Across the country, millions of people are committing to improving their financial situation, and ultimately their financial future. By joining this trend, you're not just setting goals—you're shaping a life of freedom and possibility.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor, Alexis Winder. Edward Jones, Member SIPC

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MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

MISSION VILLAGE VOICE Q&A

Andy Holcomb, Rope Horse Trainer and World Champion

By Judith Ogus and Anne Caetano

San Juan Bautista native Andy Holcomb, American Rope Horse Futurity Association World Champion, is one of the most respected rope horse trainers in the West. What sets Andy apart isn't hype or horsepower. It's the calm, intuitive way he reads a horse and meets it where it's at. He's the kind of trainer who knows when to ask for more and when to back off, when a quiet word matters more than another tap. Shaped by family, guided by legendary mentors, and still deeply connected to the land he grew up on, Andy carries an easy, earned confidence that comes from decades in the saddle—and a genuine love for the work, the horses, and the life that comes with them.

Find Andy on Instagram: holcombperformancehorses, FB: Andy Holcomb Horse Training, TikTok:@andyholcomb2 and ALL OVER YOUTUBE!

MVV: When did you start riding horses?

Andy Holcomb: My mom was really the one who made sure my brother and I were around horses from the start. I've got an older brother, and when we were about seven or eight, she started hauling us to lessons with a local trainer in Hollister, Ramona Koch.

My parents were big on not being our instructors. They wanted someone else to be the teacher so they could just be parents, which probably helped our relationship a lot. We started with the basics of riding, and Ramona also showed some in the cow horse arena, so even as kids we were dabbling in that world.

Later, when I was in high school, I was dating a girl whose brother worked for Les Oswald in Aromas. That's how I ended up over there. Les had just come off the rodeo circuit team roping for a living and wanted to stay home and train horses. I started riding with him and then working for him. I rode with Les for about three years and worked for him another three or so. That's really where the roping side of my life took off.

You stepped away for a while and then came back.

Yeah, when I was around 19 I got a little burned out and thought maybe I should try something dif-

ferent. I went down to Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo for a year or so, then came back home and went right back to riding horses.

That's when I started training out of the place off Salinas Road—our family place. My dad moved onto that ranch when he was in eighth grade. Mariana Pilaro's family has owned it for years, and my dad has been there ever since, running cows on it. I've pretty much lived on that property my whole life. It's a special place to grow up, and then to build a business on.

How many horses are you working with now?

Right now we've got roughly 45 outside horses in training, plus about 21 head that I own. That in-

cludes broodmares, some weanlings and yearlings, two- and three-year-olds, a few four-year-olds, and then older finished horses we show and compete on.

We've got five studs here at the moment, quite a few mares, and a lot of geldings. Studs can be a bit like teenage boys—they get distracted—so a lot of the job is keeping their attention on what we're doing. Geldings tend to be quieter-minded, and mares can go either way. No matter what, it comes down to keeping the horse focused on the job in front of it.

Where do all these horses come from?

About 75 percent are from California, and the rest are spread out.



Andy and his wife Fallon.



How long can a good rope horse stay competitive?

A long time if they're started right and kept sound. For years the average NFR horse was around 20.

Longevity comes from not doing the hard stuff too young. In reining, horses are started at two, shown at three, derbies at four and five—that's a lot on young joints. In team roping, outside futurities, many horses don't get roped on until they're four, five, or six. Letting them mature helps them last longer—assuming they don't find creative ways to hurt themselves, which horses are pretty good at.

What does a typical workday look like?

We're lucky where we live—we're right on the edge of the fog line, so it's not too hot or too cold. We usually start riding around 8 a.m. and finish about 5 p.m.

I personally ride around 25 horses a day, give or take, and I've got a great crew. Two full-time guys live in San Juan—Talon Petska from Nebraska and Logan Anseth from Paisley, Oregon—along with Holly Gates, who lives right over the hill in Aromas. We also have a few other gals who come in and help at different times. They saddle, unsaddle, warm horses up, cool them out, feed, clean stalls—everything that keeps both the San Juan and Aromas places flowing.

My wife Fallon is really the glue. She handles billing, hay, scheduling, logistics—and in winter, she's the one managing blankets for 40-plus horses. I'm pretty fortunate. Most days I get to stay in the arena and do my part.

How long do you ride each horse?

It depends. For me, it might be 10 minutes or 30 minutes.

With young horses, attention is everything. If a horse comes out, is warmed up, I get on, run four steers, and if the horse is focused and does its job, I'll step off and be done. If there's an issue—distraction, confusion—it might take longer. What I don't want is running 15 or 20 steers day after day. That's how horses get sore and sour. Short, focused, positive rides go a long way.

What is "lead steer" work and why does it matter?

I do that mostly at my place in San Juan. I'll put a single steer in an enclosed arena and point the horse at

Continued, next page

it, tracking left, right, fast, slow.

The release for the horse is when it locks onto the cow and does the job on its own. Then I stop, let it rest, and we go again. Most horses love it. It builds that natural desire to go to a cow and stay with it, which becomes the foundation for everything later.

How has the culture among trainers changed?

From what I've heard, it used to be more secretive. Since I've been around, it's been the opposite. Even as a kid helping Les at shows, I saw trainers sharing ideas and helping each other.

I think the influence of people like Tom and Bill Dorrance and natural horsemanship encouraged that openness. Whatever the reason, I've been lucky to be part of a very supportive community.

Have other disciplines influenced how you train?

Definitely. I've ridden Warmbloods, Morgans, Arabs, Thoroughbreds—you name it. I even rode for Osierlea dressage barn in San Juan Bautista.



Dressage focuses on collection and straightness, and that stuck with me. Team roping is a cruder sport, but those ideas still help. A balanced, straight horse is a calmer, happier horse, and that foundation lasts.

How did winning a World Championship and social media change things?

More than I ever expected. I never thought I'd be the guy signing hats or being "the video" people watch.

We don't really slow down anymore. Winter used to be lighter; now we might dip to 30 horses, but that's about it. Travel-wise, we've gotten smarter. The guys haul and I fly in, which gives me more riding time at home over a year.

Who runs your social media?

Fallon handles most of it now. Between sponsors and professional photographers at events, there's a lot of content. She keeps

everything moving on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. I mostly just ride horses and let her work the magic.

Who are the key people in your corner?

Fallon is number one. Then Talon, Logan, and Holly—they work incredibly hard. My parents, Karen and Pete Holcomb, and my cousin Mariana Pilario have always supported me, and my in-laws Monty and Chris Avery have been great too. It takes a big circle to make this work.

Have you ever trained a horse you couldn't let go of?

Absolutely. There are probably 10 or more we've kept their whole lives. Those seasoned horses are worth their weight in gold.

Do horses sometimes outthink you?

All the time. That's part of why I still love it. I'm always learning.

Last question: Are you glad you chose a career AI can't replace?

Definitely. A robot can't read a horse underneath you. I think humans and horses will have that one to ourselves for a long while. ■

VOICES OF ASJUSD: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Michelle Mize

By Dr. Barb Dill-Varga, Superintendent of ASJUSD

Aromas-San Juan Unified is a unique school district serving more than 1,000 students, where we know every student by name and by need. Each month, we will introduce you to one member of our ASJUSD family.

This month: Michelle Mize, Yard Duty Attendant at Aromas School

How long have you worked at Aromas?

I have worked at Aromas for six years, mainly as a yard duty attendant. I also fill in for the health aide when needed.

What led you to work at Aromas School?

Though I live in Watsonville, we have deep roots in Aromas. My father, brother, and I all attended Aromas when it was part of PVUSD. I've always loved kids. After working as a preschool teacher and running a catering business for 30



years, I returned to education six years ago to be near my grandchildren and reconnect with young students.

What changes have you noticed, if any, during your time with us?

COVID hit six months after I started. I handed out homework packets and assisted teachers with Zoom classrooms, which allowed me to see a different side of families. Those COVID first graders are now fifth graders. A lot of technology was introduced and is still part of our daily work. Today, the job is about being present and dependable. I try not to take time off because kids count on us. I hand out Band-Aids upon request—even when they don't really need one—just to help students feel cared for.

What do you love about Aromas?

The kids make me happy—they're fun, positive, and they talk to you. Our Home and School Club is amazing, and Principal Howell is a hands-on leader who does whatever is needed.

Any student stories that stay with you?

One kindergartener told me not to listen to her mom because her mom is half vampire. She then asked if I was also a vampire. I'm still laughing. ■

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MISSION VILLAGE VOICE Q&A

Tony Correia, wine expert

Why the wine industry is entering a new era, where the bargains are, and why San Benito County might be sitting on California's next cult varieties

By Anne Caetano

Full disclosure: Tony Correia is not only my brother-in-law (which he bears with remarkable patience), but he's also widely regarded as one of the most influential voices in the wine world. For more than four decades, Tony has appraised vineyards, guided major winery deals, and shaped how the industry understands value. We sat down over a bottle of Randall Grahm's Popelouchum to talk about the wine glut, evolving drinkers, unexpected bargains, and why some of California's most intriguing grapes are growing right here in San Benito County.

MVV: You've been honored as one of the most influential experts in the wine industry. What exactly do you do?

Tony: Technically, I'm an appraiser. I appraise vineyards and wineries. But I also consult on a lot of different situations — sales, acquisitions, restructurings — for many different buyers and sellers. Because of that, I see a lot of transactions and get a pretty good feel for what's happening across the market. I was fortunate enough to be recognized as a Leader of the Wine Industry some years back. Just had the latest dinner of Leaders in Napa a few weeks ago; Michael Mondavi was honored this year and gave a wonderful speech about all the good things about the industry, which is now available online.

And what is happening right now?

"Not great" is polite. I'd say the industry is in pretty dire straits.

The core problem is long-term and structural. Global wine production has been steadily increasing for 10-20 years while consumption has been declining over the last five to ten. Demographics are the main driver. The modern California wine industry was built on the baby boomers — they learned to appreciate wine, bought a lot of it, and powered the industry for decades. Now they're aging out, consumption is dropping, and all the data suggests it won't rebound to previous levels.

This isn't just another cycle. It's a structural shift.

Wine has always had ups and downs. What makes this cycle different?

Traditionally, the industry follows a predictable rhythm: times are good, people plant more vines, produce more grapes, make more

wine — and then we inevitably over-plant. Too much wine hits the market, prices fall, vineyards get pulled, supply tightens, and the cycle resets.

What's different now is that demand is fundamentally lower. This isn't a temporary dip — it's a demographic reality. Every winery, large or small, is feeling it. Financing is another layer. After the Great Recession, interest rates were low — three, maybe four percent — essentially free money. That fueled a lot of growth. Now money costs six or seven percent or more, and lenders are cautious about vineyards and wineries unless the buyer is very strong.

All of this makes buying, selling, or refinancing much harder.

Are you seeing more sales and foreclosures because of that?

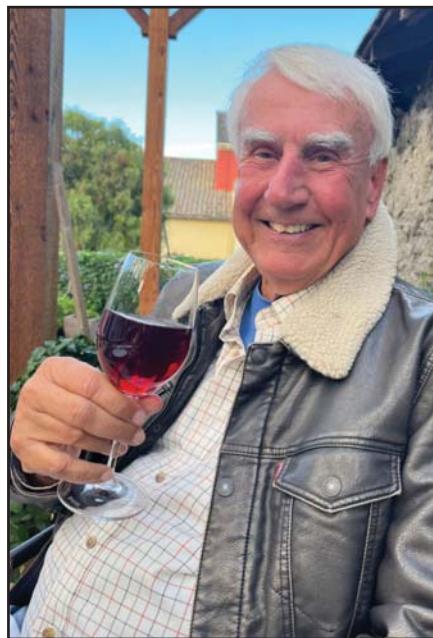
Interestingly, we're seeing a lot of properties *listed for sale* but very few actually selling. Buyers are patient. They know there will be bargains.

A few large wineries in Sonoma and Paso Robles are currently up for auction — which is unusual in the wine world. When Vintage Wine Estates collapsed, the wineries were offered at auction; one buyer picked up five wineries for about \$85 million. That was a bargain. I expect more motivated sales this winter as lenders pressure owners.

If you drive through major growing regions, you'll see vineyards being pulled out — especially in Lodi and parts of the Central Valley. Along the Central Coast, land is converting back to vegetables, which can be profitable. The landscape is shifting.

For everyday drinkers, is there a silver

"If you're willing to explore, you can drink extremely well for very little money right now."



lining?

Absolutely. One of my favorite economists used to say, "Supply and demand always seek equilibrium, perched on the fickle pivot point of price."

Translated: *there are incredible bargains right now.*

There's a global lake of very good wine that needs a home. A lot of it is being heavily discounted. Bulk wine moves from country to country in giant containers and is bottled near ports — that's what feeds a lot of the Trader Joe, Costco, Grocery Outlet, and private-label shelves.

If you're willing to explore, you can drink extremely well for very little money right now.

Are some parts of the industry doing better than others?

Yes. The very top tier — the cult wineries with loyal mailing lists — many of them are doing fine. Their customers expect to pay a premium and aren't looking for discounts.

The middle tier is mostly treading water. The small and mid-sized wineries at the bottom are struggling the most. Debt is the killer. If you're heavily leveraged or depend on yearly operating lines, this environment is tough.

And this is global — France, Italy, Spain, Australia, Chile, Argentina — everyone is in some version of the same situation. In France, the government is even paying growers to pull vines to stabilize supply.

What other trends are shaping the industry right now?

The biggest is "low-no" — low- or no-alcohol wine. Younger generations are drinking less and are more health-conscious. There's also a shift toward lighter, more approachable wines overall.

Sauvignon Blanc has been huge for several years. Pinot Grigio is the most popular white right now. And we're seeing renewed interest

in white varieties like Albariño, Verdelho, Chenin Blanc, and others. Winemakers are experimenting, rediscovering old varieties, and creating lower-alcohol options that let people enjoy a glass without feeling terrible the next day.

Then there's what I like to call "*competition for the buzz.*" Craft beer boomed, then softened. Craft spirits and cocktails are hot. And cannabis — edibles especially — is taking up a big share of the "relaxation market." The alcohol industry expected that shift, but maybe not the extent of it.

Let's talk about San Benito County. What makes our wine landscape special?

San Benito County is a treasure chest — especially in Cienega and Paicines Valleys. Those old vineyards are full of obscure, almost exclusively local varieties.

Cabernet Pfeffer is one. It's nearly exclusive to this area. **Ruché** is another — very little of it is grown in California, but it's a beautiful wine. **Falanghina**, a northern Italian white, also seems to do extremely well here.

You also have talented small producers like Eden Rift, Nat Wong's Blade and Talon, Ian Brand and Ryan Stirm in Aromas working with fruit from historic vineyards and making distinctive, character-driven wines. These aren't mass-market bottles — but for people who like discovery, San Benito County is rich with possibilities.

You've had a long career. What stands out to you when you look back?

I've been appraising vineyards and wineries for over forty years, and part of that path included teaching other appraisers across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. Our core work has been on the West Coast, but we've done projects nationwide — including what is now the Trump Winery — and for major French luxury groups buying high-end Napa and Sonoma properties.

We've gotten to see some extraordinary vineyards, estates, and homes. And I'll say this: *People in the luxury wine industry — especially the ones we work with — tend to have that very rare combination of lots of money and elegant taste.* It's a treat to experience that up close.

And now you're here in San Juan Bautista.

Five years now! My wife Stephanie and I moved here from Sonoma, and it's been a terrific change. I already knew San Benito County from decades of appraising here, but living here is something else. I've got my office in town, I can walk everywhere, and I love it.

Any final thoughts for our readers?

Two things.

First, *drink more California wine.* Second, *drink what you like.* Ignore critics, scores, and online chatter. If you like it, that's what matters.

And my favorite little philosophical twist on Descartes: "*Bibo, ergo sum — I drink, therefore I am.*" ■

ATE THERE, DRANK THAT



Donna Silva, with family and friends, enjoying Flap Jacks Breakfast & Grill in Tres Pinos.



Joey Perkins, Drew McAllister, Neil Porsch and accomplices—clearly having a very quiet, calm, totally low-key time at Aromas Grill in Aromas.



Dan Clifford keeping things seasonally appropriate at The Hideaway in San Juan Bautista.



Chenine Jones & Ismael Manriquez make sure no one leaves hungry—or thirsty, At Harvest Time Road House in Hollister.



Amber, Michelle & Latoya DeLeon, Yolanda Villegas & Jessica Diaz. Bingo & Beer at Mad Pursuit in Hollister.



Destinee Coral, bar manager at Running Rooster in Hollister, serving great spirits (literally and figuratively).



David Baldovinos keeping things friendly, polished, and welcoming at McCann's at San Juan Oaks.



Joy is a house specialty with Gianna Herbert, Nick Papageorgio, and Katie James at Vertigo in San Juan Bautista.



Drew & Ellie Quintana owners of Inaka Fusion in San Juan Bautista.



From Minnesota to Hollister: Suzanne Magnuson joins her dad, Al Gutierrez, for delicious dinner at Cosmos in Hollister.

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT



Augie Garcia, Gaby & Lisa Leon, Gloria Gutierrez & Mario Garcia @ SJB VFW —definitely behaving themselves... probably.



Nancy Girton & Laura Moorer decorated their "Friends of the SBC Library" tree for the Lights on Parade in Hollister.



Anthony Botelho & Val Egland acknowledge Paul & Denise Smith's contributions to San Benito County.



Mirastar employees distributed bears to Martha's Kitchen Senior Luncheon attendees in Hollister.



Will Chapman presents Antonio Mendoza of the Food Bank of San Benito County with the Running Rooster fundraiser check.



Small Works Art Show and Raffle Exhibition Celebration hosted by the San Benito County Arts Council.



Hailey Kemp and Ryan Morris — owners of Coyote Call, bringing something new to San Juan Bautista.



Holiday Watercolor Workshop led by local artist Karen Percival - San Benito County Arts Council.

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT



SBALT Ranch Day. (L-R): Belis Etem, Tina Jollyschmidt, Brian Schmidt, Beth Roybal, Mariah Roybal, Al Key, Lily Nugent, & Evan Merwin.



Congratulations to YMCA of SBC, who received the SBC Office of Education Community Champion award.

Left: Laurie Tankersley, Frank Sanchez Jr., & Alexandra Perez of SBC Integrated Waste Management & Recology, sharing the gift of FREE recycling programs for everyone! Right: Deanna Barth & Laurie Tankersley at SBC Integrated Waste Management community cleanup at Hollister Super, collecting +350 lbs. of litter.



Mr. Honeywell's Anzar High government classes toured San Benito County Superior Court, learning about career paths in the justice system.

ARTS

Local artists shared their predictions for arts & culture in 2026

By Julian Torres

San Benito County Arts Council

To welcome 2026, we've asked local and regional artists and community members to share their predictions for arts and culture in the coming year. Here's what they had to say:

"2026 will be the year emerging artists flourish in San Benito County, and our Legacy artists continue to inspire and endow us." **Mike Ballen, Artist/Curator**

"In 2026, arts and culture in San Benito



County will be shaped by thoughtful planning and renewed conversations about long-term impact. This period of alignment will create opportunities to strengthen local artists, programs, and partnerships in ways that are sustainable and community-driven." **Teresa Wang Board Member, San Benito County Arts Council**

"2026 will be a year when artists increasingly embrace alternative venues to share their work. I expect to see more collabora-

tions with businesses through pop-up opportunities, along with improved sales as artists take greater control of their careers." **Katherine Filice, Artist/Curator**

"My prediction for 2026 is there will be a pivot away from AI in the arts towards in person connection and art making, especially using theater as a language for change." **Alfredo Avila, Artist/Board Member/Arts Leader**

Let's keep the conversation going! Help shape California's creative future in 2026.

Our creative economy regional town hall will take place Saturday, January 10, 10am-1:30pm at the Watsonville Center for the Arts. This is a great opportunity to provide direct feedback and be a part of shaping the future of the creative economy in our region and the state.

Learn More at www.sanbenitoarts.org ■

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



Aromas Community Grange

The Aromas Community Grange brings neighbors together to support a strong, connected community. Centered around the historic Grange Hall, it hosts local events, supports neighbors in need, raises scholarship funds, and provides space for community gatherings. At its core, the Grange helps keep Aromas active and welcoming.

Donate: aromasgrange.org/donate
Join: aromasgrange.org/join

[https://aromasgrange.org/](http://aromasgrange.org/)



This space provided as a community service by Graniterock to highlight nonprofit agencies or individuals who serve our community. To be considered for this spot please contact Anne Caetano at anne.caetano@sol.com.



Green Business Tips

Turning down the power, turning up the savings in 2026

As businesses head into the new year, many are setting resolutions that go beyond sales goals and staffing plans. More and more are turning their attention to cutting energy use, reducing costs, and shrinking their environmental footprint. With energy prices fluctuating and climate goals becoming a bigger part of community conversations, local businesses are finding that small changes can make a meaningful difference.

To explore what this looks like in practice, we spoke with several businesses who have recently taken steps to improve their energy efficiency or are planning new upgrades in the year ahead.

Jardines de San Juan: Small Changes, Big Impact

Jardines de San Juan has been a beloved part of the San Benito community for 48 years. One of their recent upgrades includes installing motion-sensor lighting, which helps reduce

unnecessary energy use in areas that don't need constant illumination. Looking ahead, Jardines de San Juan hopes to install solar panels - an investment that could be made more accessible through available resources and incentives, including support from programs like the Green Business Program.

Sonia's Daycare: Leading by Example

Sonia's Daycare is another local example of how energy-saving resolutions can benefit both businesses and households. Sonia recently upgraded her facility's lighting to energy-efficient LEDs, significantly reducing energy use and helping lower monthly utility bills. But she isn't stopping there. As part of her New Year's resolution, Sonia plans to install solar panels at her home, further reducing her reliance on traditional energy sources.



Good for Business, Good for the Environment

Energy-saving measures don't have to be complicated or costly to make a difference. From lighting upgrades to motion sensors and long-term plans for solar, San Benito businesses are proving that sustainability is a smart investment. To learn more about how your business can cut down on energy consumption, contact Bryan Garcia at bgarcia@environmentalin.com. ■



MVV ēvz dräp

Friend: "I heard aliens might disclose themselves this year."

Other Friend: "Honestly, if they're smart, they'll wait until after election season. ■

Environmental Day

Three Free Services for San Benito County Residents!



2026 EVENTS FROM 9AM - 1PM

WHEN: **JANUARY 24**

WHERE: Brigantino Park

2100 San Juan Hollister Rd, Hollister

WHEN: **JANUARY 31**

WHERE: San Juan School

100 Nyland Dr., San Juan Bautista

WHAT:



Electronic Waste Recycling (E-waste)

Drop off unwanted e-waste including televisions, computers and accessories, cell phones, laptops, game consoles, radios, stereos, and small electronics with cords. *No large household appliances (stoves, refrigerators, washers, dryers, etc.) will be accepted.*



Secure Document Shredding

Bring up to five full banker boxes (legal size; 24 x 12 x 10) of documents to be confidentially and securely shredded on-site. Paperclips and staples do not need to be removed.



Compost Giveaway

Residents may take up to 32 gallons of compost to use as a soil amendment for gardens and landscaping projects. This compost is from local participation in Recology's Organics program. Please bring your own shovel and container. Limited supply available.

No assistance will be provided. Bring your own shovel, gloves and container for loading compost.



THEN: Notice the 2-story building behind the Mission Coffee Shop. Photo credit: Russell Lee, May 1942. NOW: Heritage trees shade the State Park garden behind the former Mission Café.

Then... and Now: Behind the old Mission Coffee Shop

By Wanda Guibert

San Juan Bautista Historical Society

In the Then photo taken in May 1942 by Russell Lee – an American photographer and photojournalist known for his Farm Security Administration (FSA) work – notice the two-story board and batten structure at the back of the Mission Coffee Shop located on the northwest corner of Third and Mariposa. In the Now photo, that two-story structure is gone, and in its place is a flat-roofed, one-story cinderblock addition to the rear of the former Mission Coffee Shop. Two very mature California Pepper trees now tower behind in the Heritage Garden of the San Juan Bautista State Historic Park, providing welcome shade.

When Ramon Francisco Careaga was born on 9 March 1842 in San Juan Bautista, his father, Saturnino "Pedro" Col. Careaga



Ramon Careaga funeral, the first auto procession in town, down Second Street, 1914.

THE FIRST AUTOMOBILE FUNERAL IN THIS COUNTY

An innovation in funerals in this county was introduced today with the burial at San Juan of the body of the late Ramon Careaga. An automobile hearse from San Jose carried the coffin. The mourners arrived from San Jose in automobiles and the cortege was largely made up of motor driven vehicles.

AUTOMOBILE HEARSE IS NOW IN SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco is keeping up with the times in the motor car industry. The first automobile hearse on the Pacific coast was seen on the streets of this city. It is built on a White steamer chassis and, as soon as a number of limousine bodies are completed, all built on White steamer chassis, the first automobile funeral in the west will occur.

(1818-1865), was 23 and his mother, Rita Maria Guadalupe Flores (1811-1891), was 30. Ramon married Maria Antonia Buenaventura (1854-1943), and they became the parents of at least 8 sons and 4 daughters. He moved his family to Santa Barbara County in 1873 and lived on his Los Alamos rancho, upon which the first oil in Santa Maria field was discovered by the Western Union Oil Company. When he became ill, he spent his last days in a sanitarium near his younger daughters who were attending school in San Jose, where he died of stomach cancer on 7 February 1914 at the age of 71.

In his 1936 *Notes and Memories of Individuals in the San Juan Bautista 1860 Census*, Estalano F. Larios recalls the patriarch of the Careaga family, Saturnino. "Lived and owned a large adobe house extending from

DIED.
CAREAGA—In San Jose, Cal., February 6, 1914, Ramon Francisco Careaga, beloved husband of Maria Antonia Careaga and father of Louis, Ramon, John, Bernardo, Antonio, James, Charles, Rita and Evangeline, Angelita Careaga and Mrs. John Carr, a native of California, aged 71 years, 10 months and 29 days.

Friends are invited to attend the funeral tomorrow (Monday), at 10 o'clock a. m., from the San Juan Catholic church, where mass will be celebrated for the repose of his soul. Interment San Juan cemetery. Remains at the chapel of Hocking, Arnold & Monahan until 1 p. m. today (Sunday).

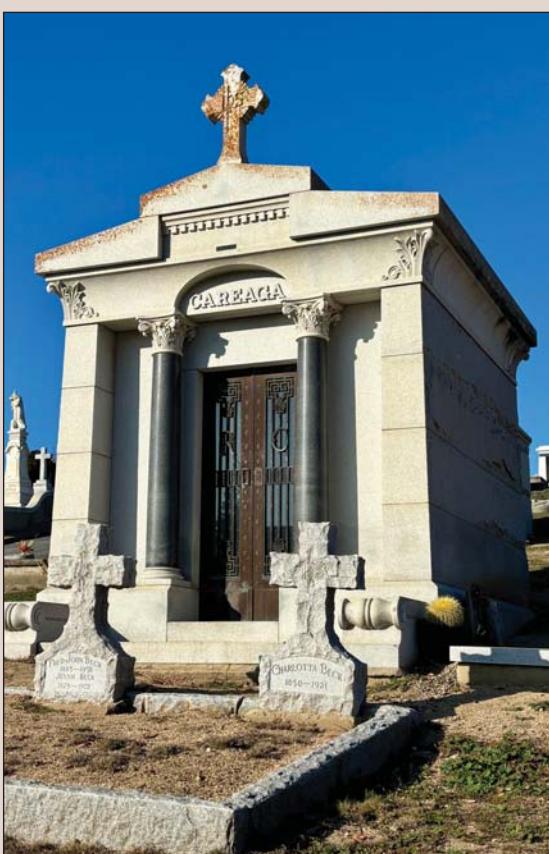
where the Mission Hotel now is [today, the Heritage Garden of the State Historic Park] to the corner house on Third Street still standing [today, JJ's Cafe] and at that time occupied as a shoe store by Julius Breitbarth, Polish Jew..."

Another early pioneer, Isaac L. Mylar, confirms in his 1929 *Early Days at the Mission San Juan Bautista*, "On the west side of Second Street, between Mariposa and Polk Street, was the home of the Carreagas [sic], a noted Spanish family in San Juan's early days..."

Mylar adds, "On Mariposa Street the thoroughfare runs down alongside of the Plaza Hotel, and between Second and Third Streets was a two-story residence building owned by the Carreagas. The two Carreaga brothers, Juan and Ramon, owned, at one time, six-hundred acres across the San Benito River between the Sanchez grant and the San Justo grant. This land is now owned by the heirs of Patrick Breen..."

He later continues, "After the Carreaga boys, Juan and Ramon, disposed of their property in and near San Juan, they moved to Santa Maria and at that place became very wealthy, oil eventually being discovered on the lands they owned there."

At the time of Ramon's death in 1914, he was widely acclaimed as a millionaire oil magnate and big cattle rancher, a "scion of old San Juan." A yellowed *Hollis-*



Careaga family mausoleum at cemetery.

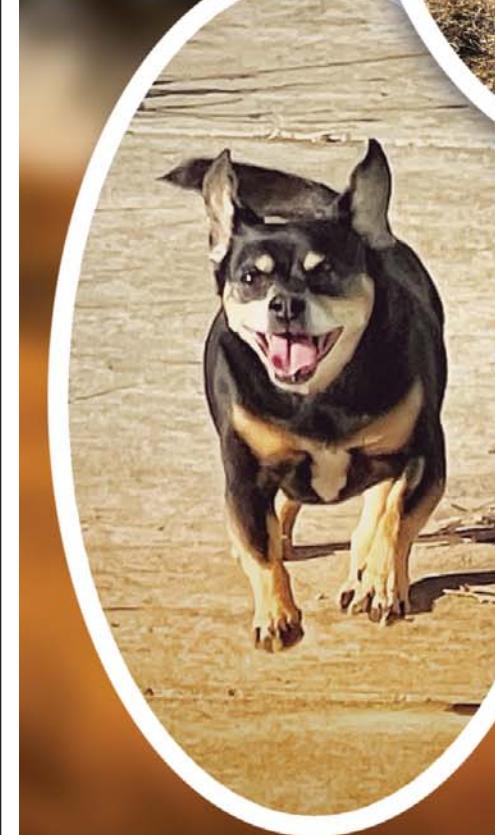
ter Free Lance newspaper clipping sadly reports, "Foiled in life of his heart's dearest purpose – the desire to live his last days out in the environment where he was born and grew up, in the little mission town where his forebears were recognized grandees for years before the American acquisition of California – death made slight atonement for Ramon Careaga, and his body was laid to rest this morning in the family plot in the Catholic cemetery at San Juan."

In a manner befitting his prominent standing in California, Ramon's was the first automobile funeral procession in San Benito County. Many mourners drove from San Jose to the funeral at the Mission, and the cortege was largely composed of motor-driven vehicles. A white automobile hearse bore his coffin to the stately family mausoleum in San Juan Bautista Cemetery on Monterey Street. It is interesting to note that in 1909 – just 5 years earlier – the *Los Angeles Herald* reported the first automobile hearse on the Pacific coast had arrived in San Francisco. Ramon Careaga's may have been among the earliest automobile funeral processions in the State. ■



Ramon Careaga home. Photo credit: Vic Mossop, Mayo Hayes O'Donnell Library

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MISSION VILLAGE VOICE | JANUARY 2026

Calendar

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 31

NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY - SAN JUAN VFW WELCOMING SPECIAL OUT OF THIS WORLD GUESTS!

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 31

NEW YEAR'S JAZZ PARTY - MORGAN HILL JAZZ COLLECTIVE 8pm-12am. Live Jazz music & dancing with a countdown & balloon drop at midnight! Curacontemporary.com Morgan Hill

THURSDAY JANUARY 1

2026 NEW YEAR'S DAY RENEWAL HIKE 10am in the Nature Area at Hollister Hills SVRA. 1.5 mile, family friendly, dogs on leash welcome. Info Hollister. Hills@parks.ca.gov or 831.636.2065. The hike will be cancelled if heavy rain.

FRIDAY JANUARY 2

OPEN MIC WITH RUDY - THE HIDEAWAY @THE-HIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

FIRST FRIDAY NIGHT MARKET @ VERTIGO SAN JUAN BAUTISTA 5-9pm. Artists/Vendors, Vinyl DJ. 4-8pm Hapa Bros Food Truck. Vertigocoffee.com

SATURDAY JANUARY 3

RICK RAMIREZ BAND - THE HIDEAWAY @THEHIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

LIVING HISTORY DAYS 11am-4pm. SJB State His-

toric Park. 1st Saturday

FULL WOLF MOON IN CANCER

SUNDAY JANUARY 4

RANCH DAYS / HIKES ON NYLAND & RANCHO LARIOS PROTECTED LANDS IN SAN JUAN BAUTISTA 9am-12pm. Families welcome! sanbenitolandtrust.org 1st Sunday

MONDAY JANUARY 5

WINTER YOUTH ART CLASSES BEGIN SanBenitoArts.org Hollister

FRIDAY JANUARY 9

NDGW MONTHLY PEDRO CARD PARTY 1pm. \$10. NDGW Adobe, 203 4th street SJB. 2nd Friday

SATURDAY JANUARY 10

LYSANDER PIANO TRIO - CARMEL SUNSET CENTER 7:30pm. Acclaimed for its passionate, polished playing and inventive programming that highlights both global connections and hidden repertoire gems. Sunsetcenter.org

RICK RAMIREZ BAND - THE HIDEAWAY @THEHIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

ABIAM ALVAREZ, GINA OCCHIOGROSSO & OPEN CALL OPENING RECEPTION 4-6pm. Curacontemporary.com Morgan Hill



Saturday, January 31

MISSION 10 RACE in Historic San Juan Bautista. Lace up those running shoes and run for your health. www.mission10.com



Monday, January 5

WINTER YOUTH ART CLASSES BEGIN! Encourage children to learn the value of expressing their creativity. Visit SanBenitoArts.org in Hollister for information.

MONDAY JANUARY 12

PERFORMERS CIRCLE - AROMAS GRANGE 7-9pm. Aromasgrange.org 2nd Monday @ Month

FRIDAY JANUARY 16

OPEN MIC WITH RUDY - THE HIDEAWAY @THEHIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

SATURDAY JANUARY 17

TAROT READING WITH TALKING CROW TAROT 3-6pm. Utopia, 207 Third St., San Juan Bautista

MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION EVENT 9am-12pm. John Smith Landfill, Hollister. Up to 15 gallons or 125 lbs of hazardous waste. Sanbenitocountyca.gov/HHW. 3rd Saturday

TIME TRAVELING HIPSTERS - THE HIDEAWAY @THEHIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

ARTISTS' TALK FOR THE EXHIBIT "REFUGE III - PLACE, CREATION, CULTURE - ARTISTS OF ASIAN HERITAGE" 3pm. Curator: Na Omi Shintani. Luna Gallery, San Juan Bautista. Lunagallery.art

RECEPTION FOR EXHIBITS "REFUGE III & ECOLOGY BLACK N WHITE + ONE" 4-6pm. Luna Gallery, San Juan Bautista. Lunagallery.art

AROMAS GRANGE PERFORMER'S CIRCLE CONCERT 3:30-9pm. Aromasgrange.org. 2nd Monday @ Month

PERFORMERS CIRCLE - AROMAS GRANGE 7-9pm. Aromasgrange.org. 2nd Monday @ Month

SUNDAY JANUARY 18

NEW MOON IN CAPRICORN

CHILDREN'S GELI PRINTING: SNOWFLAKE GARLANDS 11am-1pm. Curacontemporary.com Morgan Hill

SCROGGINS & ROSE - SANDBOX SAND CITY 3pm. Master instrumentalists Tristan Scroggins, a second-generation bluegrass mandolin virtuoso, and Alisa Rose, a Grammy-nominated violinist, deliver world-class performances that blend bluegrass and classical traditions through thoughtful arrangements and adventurous improvisation.

THURSDAY JANUARY 22

ONE HOUR INTRODUCTION TO SOULCOLLAGE CREATIVE PROCESS WITH JENNIFER COLBY 2 & 6pm. FREE. Luna Gallery, San Juan Bautista. Lunagallery.art

BUSINESS MIXER Info & register Expocon.co

FRIDAY JANUARY 23

HAWK AND SON - THE HIDEAWAY @THEHIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

SATURDAY JANUARY 24

RECOLOGY ENVIRONMENTAL DAY - HOLLISTER 9am-1pm. Brigantino Park, 2100 San Juan Hollister Road, Hollister. Drop off unwanted e-waste, secure document shredding, compost giveaway. Visit Recology.com

THE PRINCESS BRIDE: AN INCONCEIVABLE EVENING WITH CARY ELWES 6:30pm. Join Cary Elwes (Westley) for a special screening of The Princess Bride followed by a behind-the-scenes conversation filled with never-before-shared stories and "inconceivable" moments. Goldenstatetheatre.com Monterey

MOON DANCE BAND - THE HIDEAWAY @THEHIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

NATURAL DYES WORKSHOP WITH KIRTI BASSENDINE 1-3pm. Pre-register at 831.623.2783. Luna Gallery, San Juan Bautista. Lunagallery.art

Continued on next page

FREE COMPOST WORKSHOP 10am-12pm. Learn about Bio-Reactors from Master Composter Otis Johnson. 2301 Technology Pkwy., Hollister. Rsvp sbciwm@sanbenito countyca.gov

SATURDAY JANUARY 24 - MONDAY JANUARY 26

46TH ANNUAL ECOFARM 2026 CONFERENCE SEEDS OF STRENGTH: EMPOWERING FARMERS FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove. Info. Eco-farm.org

SUNDAY JANUARY 25

MARIELLE MURPHY & ALDEN GATT, VOCALS & PIANO -CARMEL SUNSET CENTER 3pm. Carmel native, is a rising coloratura soprano performing in the U.S. & Europe. She debuted at the Salzburg Festival in Thaïs with Plácido Domingo, made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2023/24, and returned in 2024/25. She is a leading soloist with Theater Münster in Germany. Sunsetcenter.org

PANCAKE BREAKFAST - AROMAS GRANGE 8-11am. Aromas Grange, Aromasgrange.org

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 28

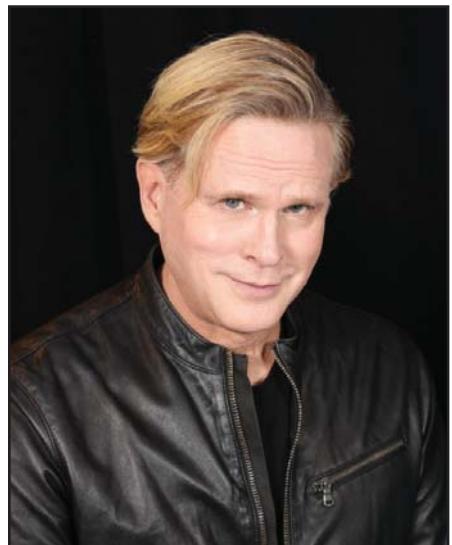
DIRTY DANCING IN CONCERT 7pm. Goldenstatetheatre.com Monterey

THURSDAY JANUARY 29

TANGO AFTER DARK - CARMEL SUNSET CENTER 7:30pm. Asizzling Argentine tango spectacle led by World Tango Champions Germán Cornejo and Gisela Galeassi, featuring world-class dancers and live music by Astor Piazzolla. Sunsetcenter.org

FRIDAY JANUARY 30

OPEN MIC WITH RUDY - THE HIDEAWAY @THE-



Saturday, January 24

THE PRINCESS BRIDE: AN INCONCEIVABLE EVENING WITH CARY ELWES 6:30pm. Join Cary Elwes (Westley) for a special screening of The Princess Bride followed by a behind-the-scenes conversation filled with never-before-shared stories and "inconceivable" moments. Goldenstatetheatre.com, Monterey

HIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

SATURDAY JANUARY 31

RECOLOGY SBC ENVIRONMENTAL DAY - SAN JUAN BAUTISTA 9am-1pm. San Juan School, 100 Nyland Drive, San Juan Bautista. Drop off unwanted e-waste, secure document shredding, compost giveaway. Visit Recology.com

MISSION 10 RACE Historic San Juan Bautista www.mission10.com

RICK RAMIREZ BAND - THE HIDEAWAY @THEHIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

Every Week

TUESDAYS

FOOD TRUCK TUESDAYS 4-7pm. San Benito St., Hollister. Market@downtownhollister.org

OFF THE CHAIN BIKES - 22 MI RIDE 6pm. Offthechainbikes.com Hollister

WEDNESDAYS

EEKS WHO DRINK - RUNNING ROOSTER TRIVIA NIGHT 6:30pm. Runningrooster.com Hollister

MARY VELASCO SELLEN SENIOR CENTER LUNCH, CHAIR YOGA & BINGO 11am Call 831.262.3484 maryedge@sbcglobal.net. San Juan Bautista VFW.

THURSDAYS

TRIVIA NIGHT WITH MIGUEL SILVA @ VERTIGO 6:30-8:30pm. El Guapo Food Truck. San Juan Bautista

VINYL NIGHT @ VERTIGO 6-9pm rotating DJ's, Hapa Bros Food Truck. San Juan Bautista

OFF THE CHAIN BIKES 33 MI RIDE 6pm. Offthechainbikes.com Hollister

SATURDAYS

OFF THE CHAIN BIKES 22 MI RIDE 8am. Offthechainbikes.com Hollister

LIVE MUSIC @ THE HIDEAWAY - SAN JUAN BAUTISTA 5pm. @THEHIDEAWAYSJB

LIVE MUSIC @ DAISY'S SALOON 9pm-12am. daisys-salon.com San Juan Bautista

Save the Date

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 5

POETRY OUT LOUD - RECITATION CONTEST San Benito Arts Council 831.636.2787 or amandachiado@gmail.com

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 7

VINTAGE JAZZ - THE SAVOY SWEETHEARTS 6-10pm. Cura Contemporary, Morgan Hill. Curacontemporary.com

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 7

BLACK HISTORY MONTH GALA Leal Vineyards, Hollister www.beproximity.org

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 7

WOLFMAN BLUES - THE HIDEAWAY @THEHIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 7

RECYCLE DAYS 9am-1pm. Dispose up to 15 gal. or 123 lbs of household waste, mattresses, tires and e-waste. Sanbenito countyca.gov/HHW. 2301 Technol-



Saturday, January 24 - Monday, January 26

46TH ANNUAL ECOFARM 2026 CONFERENCE SEEDS OF STRENGTH: EMPOWERING FARMERS FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove. Info. Eco-farm.org

ogy Pkwy., Hollister.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13

OPEN MIC, DIRTY POETRY & SPEED DATING HOSTED BY DAN KERBS - THE HIDEAWAY @THEHIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 14

SJB NATIVE DAUGHTERS OF THE GOLDEN WEST VALENTINE'S DINNER DANCE 5-10pm. SJB Community Hall. Pasta & BBQ Chicken dinner, HUGE silent auction & dancing to rockin outlaw band Spit 'N Mud.

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 21

RED TAIL WITH RICHARD SMITH & CHRIS - THE HIDE-

AWAY @THEHIDEAWAY SJB San Juan Bautista

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 22

16TH ANNUAL CULINARY ROUND UP Portola Hotel & Spa, Monterey. Ranchocieoyc.org

SATURDAY APRIL 11

OPERA CONCERT - ALLIANA LILI YANG 7-8:30 pm Cura Contemporary, Morgan Hill. Curacontemporary.com

SATURDAY APRIL 18

CAREGIVER UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE -HOLLISTER Join us for education, support and community. FREE admission. Info. Delmarcaregiver.org or 800.624.8304



Sunday, January 25

MARIELLE MURPHY & ALDEN GATT, VOCALS & PIANO -CARMEL SUNSET CENTER 3pm. Carmel native, is a rising coloratura soprano performing in the U.S. & Europe. She debuted at the Salzburg Festival in Thaïs with Plácido Domingo, made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2023/24, and returned in 2024/25. She is a leading soloist with Theater Münster in Germany. Sunsetcenter.org. Pictured: Marielle Murphy

VOICING SOME THOUGHTS

Going Al Fresco

By Halina Kleinsmith

Halls of learning worldwide feature frescoes which spell out their focus on specific disciplines including Science, Mathematics, Art, Music, History, Literature and Cultivation.

Historically, these are the building blocks of capacity and

intelligence, whose distinct fields of study spotlight the unique objects, methods, and communities that came to form the structure of University departments and curricula. Using the term discipline also relates to teaching students self-control, responsibility, and adherence to rules for a focused learning environment. It facilitates supporting them in learning how to negotiate through and successfully manage themselves in the process.

Fascinating studies evolved as our forebears matriculated from such higher schools of learning, to employ the methodologies which allowed them to work with and



When the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis commissioned Mark Balma to decorate the Founder's Hall, it created an open classroom where students can learn about how old ideas can take on new light; and how these ideas will be carried on for generations by an ancient art form.

expand their mastery of multiple applications, including chemistry and biology.

Through ongoing research and analysis, they actively developed the knowledge of plant propagation and animal husbandry. These skills were artfully applied within all cultures, tailoring the applications created to specifically develop and flourish the natural resources of each locale.

From pythagorean theorems to mathematically complex computations, geometrically configured templates propelled the tasks of construction. By accurately plotting acreage, plumbing depths and foundations, builders could capably plan successful communities with robust infrastructures.

The expression of surrounding beauty was observed and desired, and prompted renderings of flora and fauna within and without these edifices.

Fine arts, painting and sculpture were the final pallets that blended the arts and humanities to be in balance with the creative and analytical. Famous scientists and philosophers were equally represented along with scenes of daily life and nature.

Within that focus, performance became an additional important foundation for development. Theatrical songs of storytelling, indigenous sounds of national music and multiregional folk dances became a unique framework to universally share language and philosophy. ■



id·i·om

"Jedem Anfang wohnt ein Zauber inne"

Meaning: There is magic in every new beginning

This wonderful Sprichwort relates to the chances of a new Anfang, die Ungewissheit (uncertainty) of the outcome. The excitement about discovering and learning new things, that can lead you in directions you hadn't even considered. Es ist einfach magisch (It is simply magical). ■

Edward Jones

> edwardjones.com | Member SIPC



Cheers to a new year!

As the calendar turns the page, we wish you the very best in the year ahead.



Alexis Winder, CFP®, CEPA®, AAMS®
Financial Advisor

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IN MEMORY**Linda Diane Vaccarezza**

Linda Diane Vaccarezza, age 72, of Hollister, CA, passed away on December 10, 2025, in Stanford Hospital, Palo Alto, CA.

Funeral services will be held at Mission San Juan Bautista on Friday, January 9, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. Reverend Rudy Ruiz will be officiating. Burial will follow at San Juan Bautista Cemetery in San Juan Bautista, CA. Immediately following, there will be a celebration of life at the VFW Hall in San Juan Bautista, CA.

Visitation will be held at Grunnagle-Ament-Nelson Funeral Home, 870 San Benito Street, Hollister, CA, on Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 3:00 p.m., with a Rosary at 5:00 p.m., with Mary Clark officiating.

Linda was born January 20, 1953, in Salinas, CA, to Kenneth and Marilyn Vaccarezza. She went to San Benito Joint Union High School, where she graduated at the top of her class in 1971. She went on to earn her bachelor's degree from Fresno State University. She continued her education and earned a master's degree in sociology. She worked many jobs in Hollister, her last with



Diageo Winery, where she was a wine tracker. She earned Diageo Winery's "Excellence" Award in 2016.

Linda always loved being a part of her community. She was active in 4-H until she graduated high school. She was the winner of the Junior Miss Contest and was also San Juan Rodeo Queen.

She loved to volunteer at the San Benito County Historical Society and was also a member of the San Juan Bautista Historical Society. She was an active member of Immaculate Conception Church, where she helped with their annual bar-b-que fundraiser for many years and helped count the Sunday offerings.

Linda enjoyed family vacations. She went on numerous vacations with her parents and siblings. Most recently, she went to Tennessee and then to Kona, Hawaii, with her sisters.

Linda is survived by her sisters, Kendra Prosser (Steve) and Sandi Pichetti (Antone); brothers, Don, Ron (Bernadette), Steve (Diana), and Rob (Audra); and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins. She is preceded in death by her parents, Ken and Marilyn Vaccarezza; grandparents, Charles and Louise Vaccarezza; and Alex and Rose Arceo.

Memorial donations may be made to St. Jude's Children's Hospital or the American Cancer Society. ■

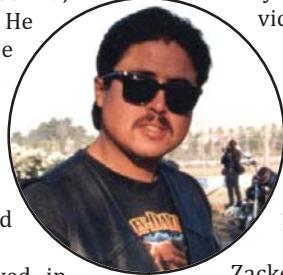
Gilbert V. Alnas

We are deeply saddened to announce that Gilbert V. Alnas unexpectedly passed away on December 15, 2025.

Gilbert was born on November 17, 1960 to John and Lupe Alnas. He was the third child out of 4. He was born at the old Hazel Hawkins Hospital on Monterey Street. He was preceded in death by his father, John H. Alnas Jr. He was a lifelong resident of San Juan Bautista and San Benito County.

Gilbert was always involved in sports. He was a Cub Scout and Boy Scout and was involved in San Juan community activities. He attended San Juan School and Hollister High. He played pop-warner and high school football.

Gilbert was a Navy Veteran and learned aviation mechanic with jet and turbo engines. He worked for PG&E at Diablo Canyon. He worked for the local carpentry union. He was skilled in masonry, cement work, construction, and plumbing.



According to friends, Gilbert was our "Go-to-Man". If we had a problem, he was the first person we called. He would drop anything for anyone in need. He was always teaching you something or showing you an easier way to do things. He had a good sense of humor and could make you laugh. He was witty and positive and gave good advice.

Gilbert helped to care for his mom. He enjoyed cooking and eating, watching football and baseball. He enjoyed watching TV game shows, educational and history channels and movies with his mom.

Gilbert is survived by his son, Zackery Alnas. He was so proud of Zackery and loved him dearly. He loved his nieces and nephews, and they loved him. He loved family, his mom, siblings, and all his cousins and kept in contact with everyone.

We will miss his smile, laugh, and kindness. His love was unconditional, and he brought joy, love, and laughter into our lives. He wasn't a saint, but he had a good heart and intentions. There will be a "Celebration of Life" in January at the VFW in San Juan to be announced. Rest in peace. ■

THOMELLIER**Real-world wine questions for uncertain times**

By Thomas Brenner

Readers write in with their most pressing wine questions. This month, many had the same thing on their minds: money, storage, health, and how to keep enjoying wine without guilt or excess.



Q: With the economy, labor shortages, and tariffs, is wine on a downturn? Are prices going up or down?

A: The short answer: Yes, things are shifting...but not collapsing.

Overall, global wine consumption has softened, especially at the higher end. People are drinking less, but often drinking better when they do. Prices for everyday wines have crept up due to labor costs, glass shortages, shipping, and farming expenses. At the same time, there's a surplus of wine in places like France, particularly Bordeaux and parts of Languedoc, which has created some incredible values.

So, while certain bottles cost more than they did five years ago, there has never been a better moment to find serious wine at fair prices if you know where to look.

Q: Are vineyards doing okay? Should I be worried about the future of wine?

A: Vineyards are resilient, but it's not easy right now.

Smaller growers are feeling pressure from rising costs and reduced demand, while large brands are trimming production. In France, some vineyards are being pulled out due to oversupply. That sounds alarming, but it's also part of a natural market correction.

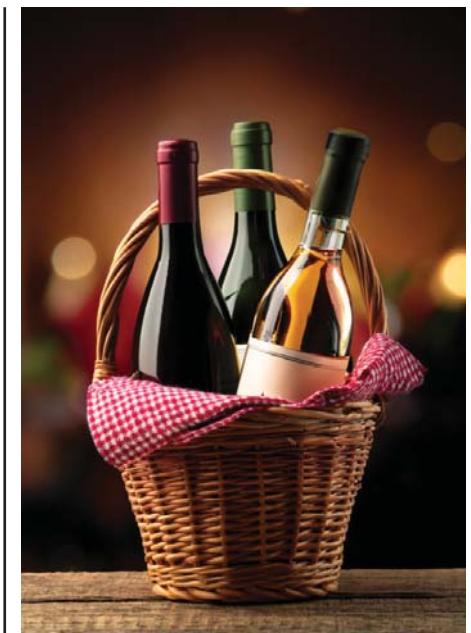
The good news? Quality hasn't gone down. If anything, it's gone up. Winemakers are adapting, focusing on balance, freshness, and wines that feel good to drink now, not decades later.

Q: Should I stock up on wine or drink less to save money?

A: You don't need to hoard...and you don't need to give it up either.

Instead of buying cases, buy smarter. Look for mixed six-packs, club specials, or wines from undervalued regions like Portugal, southern Italy, Chile, Austria, and Spain. A \$15-\$20 bottle today often delivers what a \$30 bottle did ten years ago!

And remember: fewer glasses of better wine is usually more satisfying than more



glasses of mediocre wine. The golden rule!

Q: Other than sangria or mulled wine, are there ways to stretch wine?

A: Absolutely! And Europeans have been doing this forever.

Try a wine spritz: white wine or rosé with sparkling water and citrus. A red wine refresher with a splash of chilled soda water and orange peel is shockingly good. Even a wine tonic (white wine + tonic + lemon) works beautifully in warm weather.

Lower alcohol, longer bottle life, and zero shame. This isn't dilution! It's adaptation.

Q: People worry about calories and health. Is wine making us fat?

A: Wine isn't the villain. Mindless drinking is.

Dry wines are lower in sugar than cocktails, beer, or sweet mixers. One thoughtful glass with food is very different from multiple pours while scrolling your phone.

Drink slower. Use smaller glasses. Choose dry styles. Enjoy wine with meals, not instead of them. Pleasure without excess is the goal.

Q: I store wine wrong, but I don't want wine fridges everywhere or bottles in closets. What can I do?

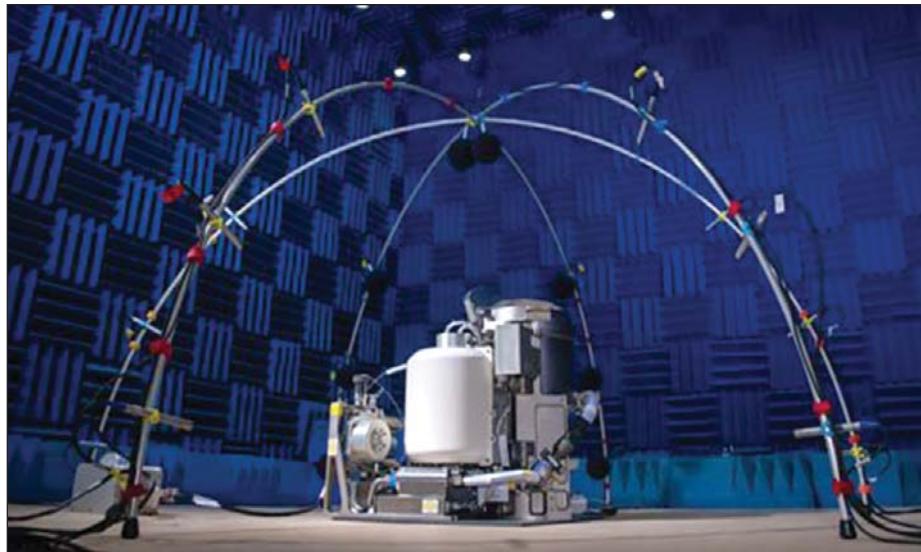
A: You don't need a cellar, just consistency.

Find a cool, dark place away from heat and vibration: a lower cabinet, under a bed, or a discreet storage box. Wine doesn't need to be displayed to be respected. And no, owning wine doesn't make you a lush. It makes you prepared!

Q: I like giving wine as a gift, but I don't want to overspend or look cheap. Help?

A: Aim for thoughtful, not flashy.

Spend \$20-\$30 on something well-made and interesting. Avoid gimmicks. Choose wines with a story: small producers, estate bottles, or classic regions. Add a handwritten note explaining why you chose it, hence elevating the gift. ■



VUE A LA LOO

How do you poop in space?

On Earth, gravity helps us a lot, even when we're on the toilet. So, in the absence of gravity, space toilets use air flow to pull urine and faeces away from the body. This airflow starts when the toilet lid in

lifted. It also features foot restraints and handholds to stop astronauts from just floating away.

NASA astronaut Jessica Meir says, "we recycle about 90% of all water-based liquids on the space station, including urine and sweat", which means "today's coffee is tomorrow's coffee!"

Faecal matter is stored in canisters which are then sent to Earth. It's either studied by scientists at NASA or burnt up by the Earth's atmosphere. But don't worry; NASA are looking into ways to recycle that too! ■



When we conserve working lands, we preserve local food production, support family farms, and maintain the rural character of our county.

SBALT NEWS

Conserving local lands, supporting families, and sustaining our community

By Laura Kirschmann, Operations Manager

Agriculture is more than an industry in San Benito County. It is a way of life and the foundation of our economy.

The vast rangelands and fields that define our county not only nourish our families but also shape the cultural identity that makes this place home. Protecting these landscapes is essential for ensuring future generations can continue to benefit from the productivity, beauty, and heritage they provide.

This is where the San Benito Agricultural Land Trust (SBALT) plays a vital role.

SBALT proactively identifies, protects, and conserves regionally significant lands in San Benito County. By partnering with landowners, community organizations, and local governments, we work to safeguard the long-term viability of agriculture and the natural spaces that support it. Whether it is working farmland, grazing property, wildlife habitat, or open space, SBALT helps ensure these landscapes remain intact and productive.

Agricultural lands provide benefits that extend far beyond property lines. When we conserve working lands, we preserve local food production, support family farms, and maintain the rural character of our county. These benefits are long-lasting and community-wide, contributing to environmental health, economic resilience, and a better quality of life.

A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement that allows farmers and ranchers to continue using their land productively while ensuring it will never be developed. Each easement is tailored to the landowner's

goals and the unique characteristics of the property. This flexibility allows SBALT to meet the needs of families who want to keep their land in agriculture and ensure that their land remains a working landscape into the future.



As a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, SBALT is supported through sponsorships, donations, and grants from those who believe in protecting San Benito County's agricultural future. We are committed to being the trusted, local organization that facilitates conservation efforts, builds strong partnerships, and responsibly stewards the properties under our care.

Over the next few months, SBALT will be sharing articles that spotlight some of the remarkable properties we protect. Each story will take you onto the land, sharing its history and its role in our agricultural community. Through these profiles, we hope to deepen the community's understanding of how conservation works and why preserving these landscapes is essential to our county's future. Learn more at www.sanbenitolandtrust.org. ■



MISSIONVILLAGEVOICE

Community Bulletin Board

Winter Neighborhood Naturalist Sessions in Gilroy

Curious about the natural world in your own backyard?

This educational program will introduce participants to the natural history of the Santa Clara Valley with a focus on local geology, plants, and wildlife.

Sessions will take place at the Gilroy Library and will include a Spanish interpreter. The sessions will feature exploratory activities, brief presentations, and group discussions. Refreshments will be provided.

A final outing at a nearby Santa Clara County Park will allow participants to gather for a course conclusion, apply their observational skills learned through the course, and receive their course certificate if eligible.

Session dates:

Saturday, January 10, 11-12:30 pm
 Saturday, January 17, 11-12:30 pm
 Saturday, January 24, 11-12:30 pm

Final outing/certificate ceremony: Saturday, January 31, 11-12:30 pm

Best suited for adults; contact the email below for questions about minimum participant age.

Registration required. Register at this link: <https://forms.gle/yYBUCqVvoY3YHgaVA>

Questions? Email interp@prk.sccgov.org.

¿Tienes curiosidad por conocer el mundo natural de tu zona? Este programa educativo introducirá a los participantes a la historia natural del Valle de Santa Clara, centrándose en la geología, las plantas nativas y la vida silvestre.

Las sesiones tendrán lugar en la biblioteca de Gilroy



e incluirán la presencia de un intérprete en español. Las sesiones contará con actividades de exploración, breves presentaciones y debates en grupo. Se ofrecerán refrigerios.

Una salida final a un parque del condado de Santa Clara cercano de la biblioteca permitirá a los participantes reunirse para la conclusión del curso, aplicar sus habilidades de observación aprendidas durante el mismo y recibir su certificado del curso si cumplen los requisitos.

Fechas de las sesiones:

Sábado 10 de enero, 11am-12:30pm
 Sábado 10 de enero, 11am-12:30pm
 Sábado 17 de enero, 11am-12:30pm
 Sábado 24 de enero, 11am-12:30pm

Salida final/ceremonia de certificados: Sábado 2 de febrero, 11am-12:30pm

Ideal para adultos; para preguntas sobre la edad mínima de los participantes, contacte con el correo electrónico abajo.

Es necesario registrarse. Regístrate en este enlace: <https://forms.gle/yYBUCqVvoY3YHgaVA>

¿Preguntas? Envíe un correo electrónico a interp@prk.sccgov.org. ■

GOING POSTAL

Love Forever Stamps

The United States Postal Service has revealed its latest Love Forever stamp series, scheduled for release on January 13, 2026. Continuing a cherished tradition that dates back more than three decades, the Love stamps return with fresh artwork conveying affection, unity, and joy.

The 2026 issue features a set of four beautifully rendered vignettes of stylized birds interacting amid heart-shaped motifs. While each scene is distinct, together they form a cohesive visual celebration of connection and caring—sentiments that resonate with senders and recipients alike. These Forever stamps will be sold in sheets of 20 and remain valid for mailing a one-ounce First-Class letter regardless of future postal rate changes.

The artist behind the 2026 Love stamps is Kathryn Rathke, a Pennsylvania-based illustrator known for her whimsical and expressive work. Rathke's designs draw on mid-



century American illustration traditions, blending graphic simplicity with emotional warmth. Her use of bold shapes, playful colors, and sweetly expressive bird figures captures the spirit of the Love series while adding a contemporary artistic voice that appeals to both collectors and casual users.

According to USPS officials, the 2026 Love stamps are intended to "uplift and inspire," offering a way for mailers to share a meaningful message with family, friends, and loved ones. ■



Reiko Fujii - "Escape book" from *Refuge III: Place, Creation, Culture - Artists of Asian Heritage*.

ARTS

Traveling exhibitions to stop at Luna Gallery

The new year brings two traveling exhibitions to Luna Gallery. "Refuge III: Place, Creation, Culture—Artists of Asian Heritage," is curated by Na Omi Shintani and features Asian American women artists from the greater Bay Area including Shari Arai DeBoer, Ellen Bepp, Cindy Chan, Reiko Fujii, Kathy Fujii-Oka, Lucien Kubo, Priyanka Rana, Maggie Yee, Priscilla Otani, Salma Arastu, Bushra Gill, and Lisa Chun Rodondi.

In describing the exhibition Shintani says, "I am intrigued by the diverse interpretations of refuge offered by these twelve artists. Some create physical spaces of refuge, while others draw inspiration and comfort from nature. Refuge can also be reflected through the creative process—including research, collection, collaging,

mark-making, sculpting, and layering. For some artists, cultural symbols and family ties are vital sources of refuge. This exhibition showcases the many ways art can convey a sense of safety and sanctuary".

An artist's talk will take place on January 17 at 3 pm followed by the opening reception.

The second concurrent exhibition is "Latino Arts - Ecology: Black N White + One" featuring 15 artists from Baja California, Mexico and Southern California traveling from the Fallbrook branch of The San Diego County Library. Using only black and white and one chosen color Latino artists explore ecological themes.

For more information visit www.lunagallery.art. ■

NOW HEAR THIS

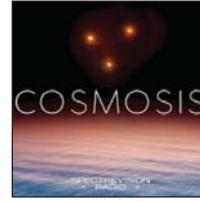
THAT UFO PODCAST

That UFO Podcast — Covers the latest UAP/UFO news, disclosures, whistle-blower claims and ongoing developments. Recent 2025 episodes deal with new testimony, alleged government documents, and what "disclosure" might actually mean.



COSMOSIS

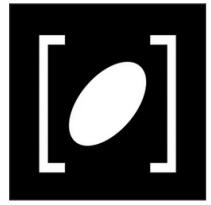
Not strictly a "UFO disclosure" show — it blends science, speculation, and cultural analysis around non-human intelligence and cosmic mysteries. Good if you lean toward thoughtful, philosophical takes rather than sensationalism.



APP-SOLUTELY

ENIGMA

Enigma is the #1 destination for UFO sighting alerts. Every day, thousands of people see something they can't explain in the skies. Seen something unusual? Share your UFO sighting story and read accounts from thousands of other witnesses.



PHENOM

Phenom is an Android mobile app initiative to build the world's most comprehensive intelligence tool for collecting, analyzing, and reporting Unidentified Aerial Phenomena and other Unexplained Phenomena, such as UFO/UAPs, Cryptozoology and Paranormal activities.



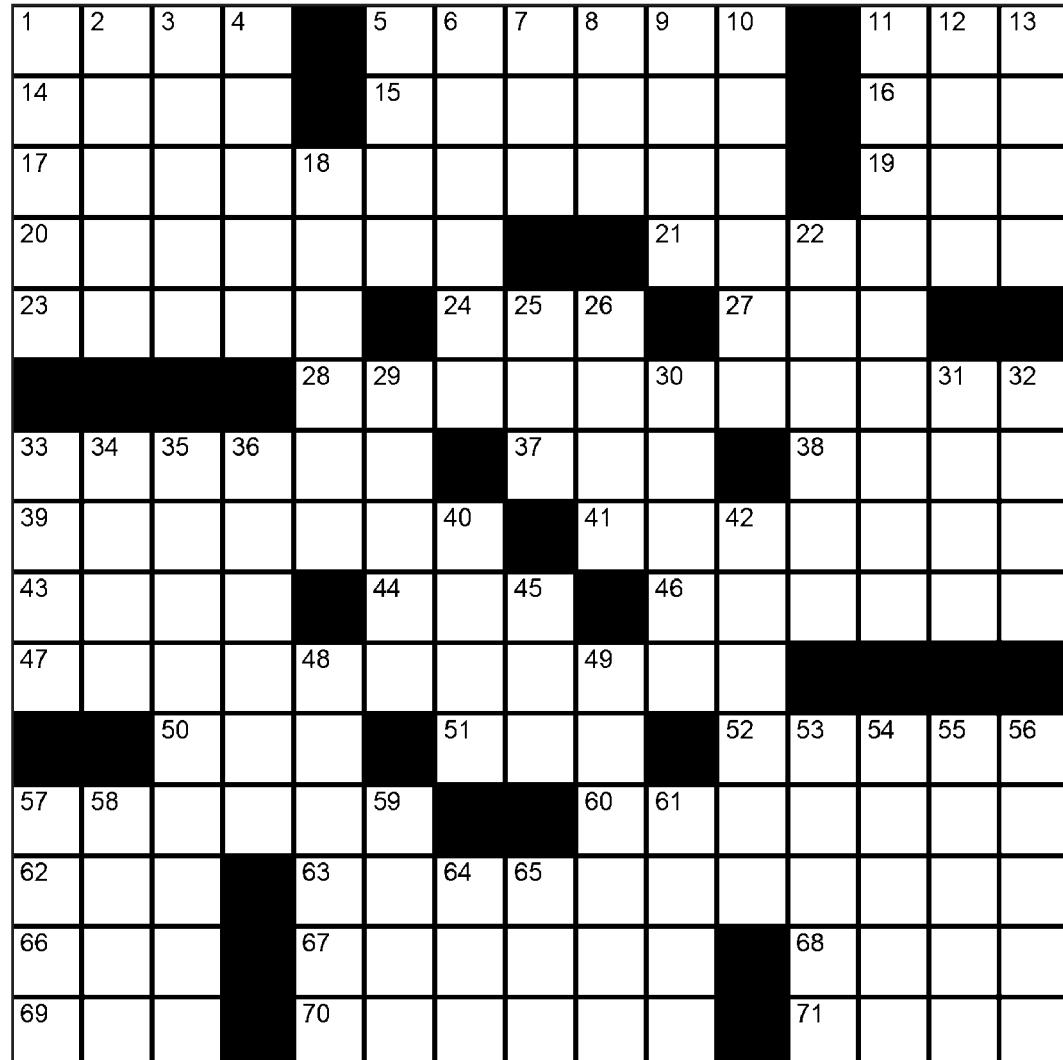
Mission Village VOICE PASTIMES



CROSSWORD By Carlinka

Across

1. Spinning toys or garments for the upper body
 5. In the same place, footnote abbreviation
 11. Observe with eyes
 14. Large colorful ocean fish
 15. Herb with blue star-shaped flowers
 16. Possessive pronoun for a male
 17. Acidic condiment made from fermented grapes
 19. Dadaist sculptor Jean
 20. Without limit or conclusion
 21. Creator of Mickey Mouse
 23. Transactions or agreements
 24. Venomous Egyptian snake
 27. Pester persistently
 28. Thinker who studies fundamental questions
 33. Great Plains Native American people
 37. Evergreen tree with toxic seeds
 38. Trim or peel
 39. Receive from a predecessor
 41. Mechanical device
 43. Greek letters
 44. Plant seeds or female pig
 46. Trapped with a rope loop
 47. Underhanded campaign tactics
 50. Enemy or adversary
 51. Old English letter
 52. Wander from the proper path



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

57. Sacred Egyptian beetle

60. Small fish of the herring family

62. Drag with effort

63. Those seeking independence from a larger group

66. Plural form of "to be"

67. Contaminates or spoils

68. Clarified butter used in cooking

69. Affirmative response

70. Desert plants with sword-shaped leaves

71. Formal address for men

Down

1. Pulled behind a vehicle

2. Express an opinion

3. Black and white bamboo-eating bear

4. Hard protective outer covering

5. Wading bird sacred to ancient Egyptians

6. Miniature potted tree

7. Anger or wrath

8. Hanging end of something

9. Mild exclamation of surprise

10. Fine wool from Spanish sheep

11. Kidnaps for ship service

12. Ireland in Irish

13. Catch sight of

18. Evening prayer service

22. Ancient Greek lyric poet from Lesbos

25. Crafty or cunning

26. Piece of verse

29. Robbery or theft

30. Stylish elegance

31. Sea eagle

32. Tall marsh

grass

33. Having two or more colors in patches

34. Opposed to

35. Fees for using a dock

36. Wise Greek king in the Trojan War

40. Ripped or rushed

42. Pamper excessively

45. Intelligence or humor

48. Frothy or exuberant

49. Document or charter

53. Small

branches

54. Hindu sage or seer

55. Following in time or place

56. Affirmative votes

57. Kill or greatly impress

58. Remedy or heal

59. Boyfriend or suitor

61. Young woman

64. Photograph

65. South African political party

December Solution

M	A	M	B	O	A	B	L	E	B	A	L
O	R	E	A	D	P	E	E	S	L	U	X
D	I	S	R	E	S	P	E	C	T	F	U
S	L	A	B	K	E	P	I	R	I	D	E
E	R	I	N	T	H	E	N	T	E	N	S
S	E	C	O	N	D	T	H	O	U	G	T
V	A	L	U	E	H	I	N	D	O	W	L
E	R	I	E	G	O	N	G	A	R	I	A
T	A	T	G	A	V	E	U	N	A	R	M
O	N	E	S	I	Z	E	F	I	T	S	A
C	Z	A	R	N	E	A	T				E
E	Y	E	D	C	Y	S	T				S
I	S	L	A	M	S	O	F	A	O	B	O
S	P	U	R	O	F	T	H	E	M	O	N
L	A	T	E	C	A	M	S	C	I	R	C
E	Y	E	D	C	Y	S	T				E

HOROSCOPE JANUARY 2026 by Hilda De Anza

Aries (March 21–April 19)

January nudges you to slow down just long enough to recognize what you've already built. Career pressure rises early in the month, but a breakthrough arrives when you stop forcing outcomes. A private conversation around the full moon helps you release a responsibility you've outgrown. Choose the path that feels lighter, not louder.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)

The year begins with expanding horizons. Travel, learning, or a new philosophy calls you forward. Someone inspires you simply by living boldly, and you start craving more authenticity in your own routines. January's changes are gentle but deep: follow the quiet tug toward a bigger life and don't apologize for wanting more.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)

You enter January ready to simplify. Financial matters, shared resources, or long-term commitments ask for clarity. The new moon brings a moment of truth that clears away confusion and shows you what's sustainable. Intimacy grows when you drop the rehearsed version of yourself and let someone see the real, unfiltered you.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)

Relationships take center stage — and the full moon in your sign highlights where your emotional needs have gone unnoticed. This month encourages tenderness without self-sacrifice. A partnership, whether personal or professional, evolves when you stop cushioning your words and speak from honesty instead of habit.

Leo (July 23–August 22)

January brings a return to order. You're clearing the clutter — mentally, physically, emotionally — and making space for the opportunities arriving later in the spring. Your health and daily rhythms improve when you choose structure that feels supportive rather than strict. A small habit shift becomes a life-changer.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)

January encourages play, exploration, and remembering what genuinely delights you. Romance may surface in a subtle but sincere way. Don't overanalyze every signal; follow the spark. By month's end, a hobby or

passion project shows signs of becoming something more.



Libra (September 23–October 22)

Home and family draw your attention. You may rearrange, remodel, or reclaim a space that hasn't felt like "you" in a while. Emotional roots are stirred, but in a healing direction. A boundary you set early in the month strengthens your peace, not your distance. You get to choose who enters your inner circle.



Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

January brings momentum. Conversations move quickly, ideas flow, and communication becomes your superpower. A project restarted now finally gains traction. Siblings or close friends may play a bigger role in your plans. Stay flexible — the detour you didn't want becomes the exact breakthrough you needed.



Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)

Your finances and self-worth intertwine in revealing ways this month. You're recognizing the value of your skills and time, and you're done undercharging — emotionally or professionally. A small win early in January boosts confidence. By month's end, you make a choice that stabilizes your future self.



Capricorn (December 22–January 19)

It's your season, and January hands you the steering wheel. The new moon in your sign encourages a clean beginning, especially around identity, goals, or personal boundaries. You're stepping out of an old skin. Don't rush; transformation lands quietly before it becomes visible. Trust the internal shift.



Aquarius (January 20–February 18)

Your inner world becomes louder than the outer one. Dreams, intuition, and old memories surface, not to overwhelm you but to help you release last year's weight. Listen closely. A private victory mid-month strengthens your confidence. When Aquarius season arrives, you feel newly aligned and ready to emerge.



Pisces (February 19–March 20)

Your community becomes your compass. January highlights friendships, collaborations, and shared dreams. Someone you meet or reconnect with offers a doorway to an opportunity you didn't expect. Say yes more often. Momentum grows when you stop going it alone and let others match your energy.

#THE GOLDEN AGE

Housing help for Goldens

By Leanne Oliveira

"There is only one solution if old age is not to be an absurd parody of our former life, and that is to go on pursuing ends that give our existence a meaning... One's life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship, indignation, compassion." - Maria Popova

Happy 2026! Let's try to make real gains toward addressing our local housing crisis this year. Our recent Point in Time (PIT) count reported 350+ homeless with a majority of seniors and single mothers living in autos/RVs and on couches. They grew up here, have family here, and work here.

Embarrassingly, our single shelter only offers 50 beds, only assists age 18+, and is closed daytimes all year except Winter. Without a Section 8 rental assistance voucher (currently waitlisted ten years!), "low-income" housing rates of \$1400+ for a 1-bdrm are a joke since Goldens only receive \$1200-\$2000/mo from Social Security for ALL their expenses.

To discourage the "homeless element," most campgrounds have become quite expensive and are implementing policies requiring newer model RVs, capping the length of stay, and not allowing single cars without a tent. Additionally, unlike all our



Philip Geiger with the Alzheimer's Association facilitated an ugly sweater contest at a meetup of the Senior Roundtable for Monterey and San Benito Counties.

neighboring counties, SBC also lacks any overnight safe legal parking site. Prior to the County dissolving its only committee dedicated to homelessness this year (The Homeless Taskforce), other members and I called 25+ faith-based organizations and NONE were interested in collaborating. Let that sink in.

Seniors have the highest rates of suicide in the USA. Instead of calling the police to give someone a ticket they can't afford and make them feel like a criminal when there aren't any practical solutions available (see all facts above), understand that someone parked in YOUR neighborhood because they felt safe there. Be part of the solution and consider offering a warm meal instead.

GOLDEN TIP: Help by contacting your Electeds, join the next PIT Count (831-637-

9293), consider the Housing For All work-group or look into volunteering (831-975-2596 x204), or visit me at the ADRC (888-637-6757) if you have a unit for a needy senior. Goldens make great renters!

Leanne Oliveira (MLIS, MA History) co-coordinates the Aging & Disability Resource Connection program for Seniors Council at the Community Center in Hollister and writes #Bookworm for the MVV. Contact LeanneO@SeniorsCouncil.org or visit www.SanBenitoADRC.org. ■



ALL ARE WELCOME TO JOIN OUR GROUP SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR EDUCATION, GUIDANCE AND ADVOCACY FOR LOVED ONES

Every third Tuesday of the month

12:00pm

Community Foundation San Andreas Meeting Room
440 San Benito Street
Hollister, CA 95023

Surviving a stroke is not the end; it's the beginning of a new chapter where strength, determination, and hope pave the way to recovery.

Caring for someone with Alzheimer's isn't always easy.
Cuidar a alguien con Alzheimer no siempre es fácil.

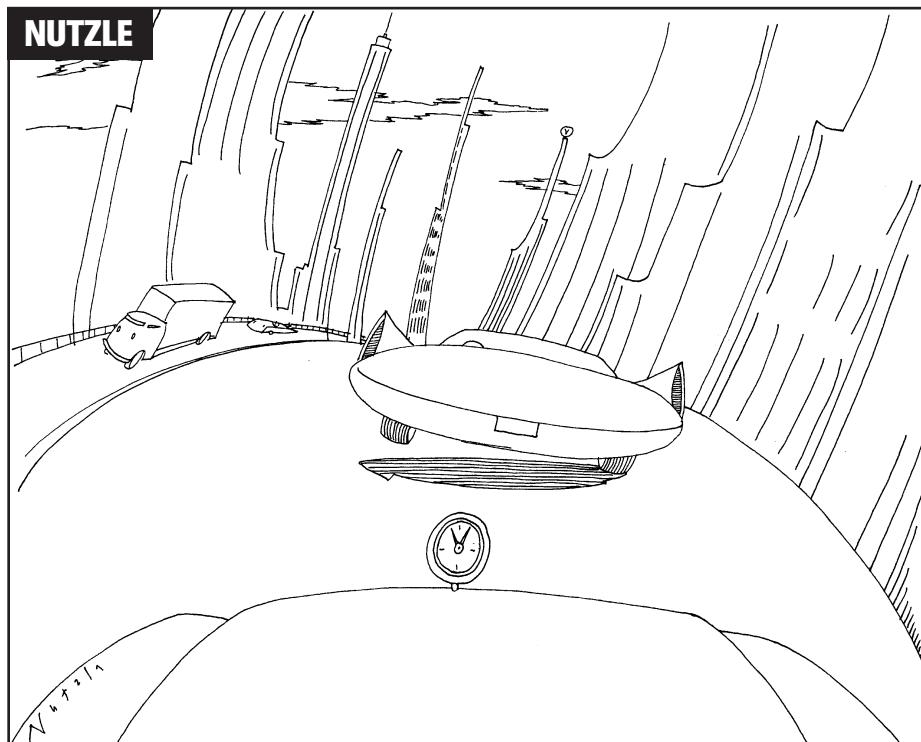


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