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# Tax Day Looms

11

# CASTRO VALLEY FORUM

A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER SERVING CASTRO VALLEY SINCE 1989

YEAR 33

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2021

NO. 5

## INSIDE YOUR FORUM

### NEWS



#### Boost for BART

First batch of Federal  
Emergency Funds  
allocated to BART

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### NEWS

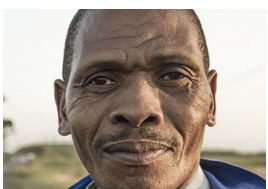


#### A Roof Overhead

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### NEWS



#### Finding Roots

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PHONE: (510) 614-1560



PHOTO BY DEBBIE TEE

The first major storm of the season pounded commuters on I-580 near Redwood Road last Tuesday evening. The recent downpours boosted Castro Valley's rain totals significantly, but still left the East Bay far below the seasonal norm for this time of year.

## Storm Soaks East Bay

A fierce atmospheric river storm brought extreme weather to the East Bay and most of Northern California last week, flooding streets, toppling trees and triggering power outages and mudslides. More than 16 inches of rain fell in some mountainous parts of the state.

Hardest hit was the Big Sur area where a landslide took out a section of coastal Highway One, isolating part of the community.

Castro Valley recorded more than \_\_\_\_ inches of rain during the downpours, boosting totals to \_\_\_\_ for the season, which began Oct. 1. But that

is still less than half of the area's average rainfall for this date.

The good news is that up to seven feet of snow blanketed parts of the Sierra Nevada mountains, increasing the snowpack to about 66 percent of normal. That snow is the source of most of our drinking water.

The bad news is that we are now into February and the bulk of the winter rainy season tapers off next month. With the exception of a forecast of scattered showers for today, the outlook for the next week is for sunny, dry weather.

### COVID-19

## Schools Taking Safe Path With Return to Class

By Michael Singer  
CASTRO VALLEY FORUM

Students and teachers may have been cleared to return to California classrooms, but local school district officials are taking few chances with continued Covid infections and the slow roll-out of vaccine.

The state opened the way for in-person instruction last Friday for K-12 schools granted that they have a published and approved safety and prevention plan in place.

Currently, students in grades below middle school can return with restrictions. Middle and high school students will be allowed back on campus if infections remain low for five consecutive days and the county remains firmly in California's designated Red Tier. Alameda County is currently in the Purple Tier, the most restrictive stage.

The Castro Valley School District has had small hubs open at every school since October.

"Our roadmap is complete, and the plan is to reopen elementary schools in phases starting with transitional kindergarten and kindergarten, followed by first and second grades," said Superintendent Parvin Ahmadi.

In a letter to parents and students last Friday, Ahmadi acknowledged that the Senior Class of 2021 and their families will have missed most of their year by the time they can come back to classes.

"We will do everything possible to make sure graduation and promotion ceremonies are as memorable as possible, recognizing that ceremonies, as we have previously had prior to Covid are not possible," Ahmadi said.

Sports programs were benched by the pandemic for the past 12 months, but Castro Valley and San Leandro have made athlete conditioning available in small groups since the fall.

Some physically-distanced programs like cross country, golf, ten-

nis, swimming, and track and field are likely to return later this year if the numbers improve, according to a statement by North Coast Section executives last Thursday.

While the school districts inch closer to getting kids back into the classroom, Alameda County has yet to begin vaccinating teachers.

"We are still in Phase 1-a with about 145,000 individuals in that category," said Public Health Department spokesperson Neetu Balram, adding that according to the state's dashboard about 140,000 doses have been administered. Alameda County ranks 7th in the state for vaccination distribution.

The first phase includes first responders and health care workers. Phase 1-b would include those who work in education, childcare, emergency services, and food and agriculture.

"We anticipate moving to Phase 1-b, Tier 1 soon pending vaccine supply, which continues to be the biggest challenge," Balram said. "We likely won't complete Phase 1-a in Alameda County before we move into Phase 1-b Tier 1, so health care workers will continue to have access to the vaccine appointments."

The good news is that Alameda County saw a drop in infections in January as the winter surge recedes. Public Health Department stats show only seven thousand new cases in over a week and fewer patients ending up in hospital beds.

see COVID on page 10

Castro Valley  
Confirmed Cases = 2,164

Alameda County  
Vaccinations= 138,052  
Confirmed Cases = 73,771  
Deaths = 980

California  
Confirmed Cases = 3,258,706  
Deaths = 40,908

as of February 1, 2021

## The Baywood Court Bubble

The first Covid-19 vaccinations for all residents and staff at Baywood Court Retirement Community in Castro Valley were administered by Walgreens last week.

"We're grateful that our community is one of the first to get protection and peace of mind from this virus and we hope it will mark the start of a path back to a safer, more open lifestyle for our residents and the greater community," said Baywood Chief Executive Matt Neal.

Staff members have strictly enforced community policies, while many found creative ways to keep residents' spirits high with exercises, outdoor musical performances, seasonal food tasting events and farmers' markets outdoors.

see BAYWOOD on page 10



PHOTO COURTESY OF BAYWOOD COURT

Baywood Court resident Mary Kincaid gets her first shot.



## Castro Valley Weather Feb 3-7, 2021



Wednesday  
Showers  
High 55° Low 40°



Thursday  
Sunny  
High 58° Low 37°



Friday  
Sunny  
High 63° Low 39°



Saturday  
Sunny  
High 65° Low 42°



Sunday  
Partly Sunny  
High 66° Low 48°

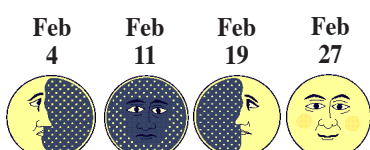
### Almanac



Sun sets at 5:36 p.m. today, rises at 7:12 a.m. Thursday.

Past Week's Rain: 03.09  
Season To Date: 06.58  
Normal To Date: 11.16  
Season Average: 21.22

### Moon Phases



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## BART Receives Federal Emergency Funds

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) allocated \$103.7 million to BART last week, part of the first batch of funds from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021, which included \$14 billion for public transit.

This first tranche of funds is being distributed to Bay Area transit operators that received insufficient shares of CARES Act funding due to inaccurate revenue-loss forecasts.

"We are grateful for the MTC moving quickly to distribute this first batch of funds to help offset more of the revenue losses incurred over the last year," said BART General Manager Bob Powers. "These funds provide short-term relief, preventing layoffs and providing funds to keep our current service levels for our current ridership, which is heavily transit dependent."

BART, however, will still need to make a schedule change in March which will include small adjustments to current service and running 3-route service on Saturdays.

BART will use \$55 million of the allocated funds to close the current year deficit; the rest will help reduce the deficit in the next fiscal year. Prior to considering new federal assistance, BART anticipated a deficit of approximately \$500 million through the end of fiscal 2023. The new funds will reduce the deficit forecast deficit, but an allocation of remaining federal

funds will be needed to prevent further service cuts and layoffs.

"While we continue to advocate for these funds, we also must continue to right-size our workforce and budget through retirement incentives, shifting operating workers to capital projects, and significantly reducing non-essential overtime and other costs," General Manager Powers said.

## School Materials for Preview

Castro Valley community members are invited to preview new high school science instructional materials proposed for district adoption.

The Biology and Chemistry Science materials align with California's new Next Generation Science Standards. Administrators, parents and teachers have been working together to select and evaluate the materials for the past year.

The Castro Valley community members are invited to preview the instructional materials through Monday, Feb. 22, at the Educa-

tional Services office at CVUSD headquarters, 4400 Alma Avenue, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays.

Instructional materials include Biology of the Living Earth: (Savvas California) "Miller and Levine Experience Biology" 3 Course Model, and Chemistry in the Earth System: (Savvas California) "Experience Chemistry," Houghton Mifflin Harcourt California HMH Science Dimensions Chemistry in the Earth System.

For questions about this public preview, contact Lauren Baiocchi at 510-537-3000 ext.1243 or lbaiocchi@cv.k12.ca.us.

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**FLUORESCENT BULBS: Pete's Ace Hardware** (2569 Castro Valley Blvd.) accepts up to eight fluorescent bulbs from residents. For any questions, call Pete's Ace Hardware at (510) 581-7633.

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## SHERIFF'S REPORTS

COMPILED BY MICHAEL SINGER

### Caught with Drugs

Monday, February 1: at 2:16 a.m., Sheriff's deputies arrested a 56-year-old woman with no permanent residence on suspicion of possession of illegal narcotics. The woman was hanging outside a convenience store on Redwood Road near Grove Way when deputies stopped her for questioning and discovered her stash. The woman was taken into custody.

### Made Death Threats

Sunday, January 31: at 11:31 a.m., a 56-year-old man from Castro Valley was arrested on suspicion of making death threats. Deputies responded to a report of a verbal argument outside a storage business on Grove Way near Redwood Road. The man was questioned by deputies about his accusations, but the man became aggressive and tried to get away. Deputies charged him with an additional count of resisting arrest and took the man into custody.

### Contempt of Court Order

Friday, January 29: at 4:48 p.m., deputies arrested a 49-year-old man from Castro Valley on suspicion of violating the terms of a court-issued restraining order. The man was spotted within the 100-foot restriction at a property near the intersection of Somerset Avenue and Lake Chabot Road. Deputies took the man into custody.

### Sex Offender

Friday, January 29: at 1:01 p.m., a 56-year-old man from Castro Valley was arrested on suspicion for failing to register as a sex offender after having served time for a related offense. Deputies were called to a home on Heyer Avenue near Center Street to investigate a suspicious person. The man was handcuffed and taken into custody.

### Public Intoxication

Saturday, January 30: at 3:35 a.m., deputies arrested a 25-year-old man from Castro Valley on suspicion of public intoxication. The man was hanging out in a restaurant parking lot on Castro Valley Boulevard near Redwood Road. Deputies stopped the man for questioning and report he failed his field sobriety test. The man was taken to a sobering center.

### Busted for Drug Possession

Wednesday, January 27: at 11:15 p.m., deputies arrested a 31-year-old woman from Castro Valley on suspicion of possession of illegal narcotics. The woman was traveling on Center Street near Grove Way when deputies stopped her for questioning and discovered her stash. Deputies took the woman into custody.

### Violated Court-Issued Restraining Order

Monday, January 25: at 1:37 p.m., a 29-year-old man from Castro Valley was arrested on suspicion of violating a court-issued restraining order. Deputies responded to a report of a suspicious person outside an apartment on Lake Chabot Road near Somerset Avenue and identified the man as the suspect. The man was taken into custody.

### Driving While Drugged

Monday, January 25: at 10:09 a.m., deputies arrested a 60-year-old man from Castro Valley on suspicion of driving under the influence of prescription drugs and driving with an expired license. The man was traveling on Edwards Lane near Center Street when deputies pulled him over for excessive speeds. The man failed his field sobriety test and was taken into custody.



## Kiwanis Award

Lynne Tierney of Castro Valley received a 2021 Distinguished Service Award from the California-Nevada-Hawaii District Foundation of Kiwanis International for her countless hours of service to the youth of the community. Tierney, a retired Castro Valley High School teacher, is a member of the Hayward-Castro Valley Kiwanis Club. Her efforts have touched the lives of over 700 local children in the last year, both directly and through her work with Salvation Army, Kids Against Hunger, and other local relief organizations.

## Hastings Named Director of School District Purchasing

The Castro Valley School Board unanimously appointed Charity Hastings as Director of Purchasing & Warehouse at last week's board meeting.

Hastings, who has worked with the district since 2013, will be responsible for overseeing the school district's purchasing, distribution, and contractual procedures. She was formerly the Account Technician at Castro Valley High School and, later, Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent of

Business Services.

She is an alum of Vannoy Elementary, Canyon Middle and Castro Valley High schools, who also served as a parent leader while her children attended Castro Valley Schools.

Hastings holds a degree from Oregon State University in Human Development and Family Sciences, and has had many years of financial experience both in the private sector and in education administrative support roles.

## Ban on Evictions Extended By Hayward City Council

The Hayward City Council approved emergency legislation last week renewing and extending temporary bans on the eviction of local residents and businesses experiencing COVID hardships.

The two measures took effect on Monday, following the Jan. 31 expiration of the state's moratorium on residential evictions. Both will remain in place until June 30,

unless superseded by new state laws. The Hayward eviction protections do not relieve residential or commercial tenants or homeowners of obligation to pay, but they contain provisions intended to allow residents and businesses to remain in place while catching up on what they owe.

For more info, 510-583-4454 or email: housing@hayward-ca.gov.

## Arrest for Illegal Narcotics

Wednesday, January 27: at 3:34 p.m., a 54-year-old man with no permanent residence was arrested on suspicion of illegal possession of a controlled narcotic. Deputies

stopped the man as he was traveling on Greenridge Road near Crown Court where they discovered his stash. The man was handcuffed and taken into custody.

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# REAL ESTATE GALLERY

## REAL ESTATE REALITY

By Carl Medford, CRS  
Special to the Forum

GUEST COMMENTARY



## HomeLight Survey Identifies 2021 Top Housing Market Trends

During the recession, For Sale signs dotted neighborhoods like dandelions on a spring lawn. Driving through neighborhoods currently reveals a different situation: there are virtually no homes for sale.

Not just a local issue: a HomeLight survey of more than 1,000 real estate professionals nationwide identified limited inventory as 2021's No. 1 housing market problem (*magazine.realtor/daily-news/2021/01/20/real-estate-pros-pick-2021s-7-biggest-housing-issues*).

Here are the survey's top 7 projected issues for 2021:

Record low inventory: whether a result of COVID-19 or other issues, the fact remains that market inventory is down across the country. The lack of homes

is spurring multiple offers and boosting prices.

Consumer confidence will grow: as the vaccine becomes more widely available, it is believed more sellers will begin putting their homes on the market. Additionally, as businesses reopen, job security could propel more buyers into the market.

Foreclosures will increase: as the stimulus plans end later this year and loan forbearance programs cease, some may end up losing their homes. It will, however, be nothing like the previous recession.

Mortgage rates will stay low: as long as rates remain at rock-bottom levels, buyers will continue to flood the market. Additionally, refinances are happening in such large numbers they are effectively clogging

the lending pipeline, adding to transaction delays.

Work from home is opening doors: many analysts believe the virus has changed the workforce landscape forever.

Inspired by the fact they can permanently operate from their dining room tables, many stay-at-home workers are looking to relocate to less expensive areas and homes more suited to the new realities.

COVID surges will not affect the housing market: one of the huge surprises during the pandemic is that the real estate market has acted the exact opposite of what was predicted. Whereas a natural disaster might have destroyed physical buildings and slowed the market, the virus has left the housing stock intact, allowing for continued sales.

Now that the virus is no longer a surprise and we have learned to navigate in this new world, further outbreaks should not hinder the market.

Affordability has become a significant issue: as prices spike due to inventory shortages, many are getting priced out. To offset this problem, the new administration is suggesting a \$15,000 first-time buyer tax credit may be in the offing.

With 2021 off and running, while facing uphill challenges, the Central County Realtors also encourage you to stay safe.

(*magazine.realtor/daily-news/2021/01/20/real-estate-pros-pick-2021s-7-biggest-housing-issues*)

Carl Medford is a licensed Realtor with Keller Williams Realty and a licensed general contractor. This article is sponsored by the Central County Marketing Association.

### WEAR A MASK

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### RECENT HOME SALES

#### Castro Valley

17324 Ehle Street	94546: \$615,000 3 BD - 1,437 SF - 1952
20144 Forest Avenue	94546: \$635,000 2 BD - 1,339 SF - 1985
2210 Lobert Street	94546: \$785,000 3 BD - 1,298 SF - 1948
4742 James Avenue	94546: \$860,000 2 BD - 944 SF - 1948
4836 Larimer Way	94546: \$873,000 3 BD - 1,176 SF - 1959
5180 Chesney Glen Dr	94552: \$920,000 3 BD - 1,374 SF - 1998
3270 Lenard Drive	94546: \$970,000 3 BD - 1,593 SF - 1958
6280 Crow Canyon Rd	94552: \$1,025,000 2 BD - 1,174 SF - 1959
19607 Adair Drive	94546: \$1,030,000 4 BD - 1,762 SF - 1955
3471 Lenard Drive	94546: \$1,030,000 3 BD - 2,000 SF - 1957
4593 James Avenue	94546: \$1,170,000 4 BD - 1,937 SF - 1950
3517 Northwood Drive	94546: \$1,200,000 4 BD - 2,378 SF - 1953
22559 Canyon Terrace Dr	94552: \$1,560,000 5 BD - 2,507 SF - 2002

TOTAL SALES: 13

LOWEST AMOUNT: \$615,000 MEDIAN AMOUNT: \$970,000  
HIGHEST AMOUNT: \$1,560,000 AVERAGE AMOUNT: \$974,846

#### San Leandro

1450 Thrush Avenue #16	94578: \$398,000 2 BD - 820 SF - 1994
1024 Martin Boulevard	94577: \$580,000 2 BD - 886 SF - 1943
14886 Saturn Drive	94578: \$630,000 2 BD - 941 SF - 1953
2056 Manchester Road	94578: \$640,000 2 BD - 983 SF - 1948
1238 Ottawa Avenue	94579: \$700,000 3 BD - 1,081 SF - 1951
1611 143rd Avenue	94578: \$720,000 2 BD - 984 SF - 1948
1342 Belding Street	94579: \$760,000 3 BD - 1,230 SF - 1957
1647 Lanier Avenue	94579: \$770,000 3 BD - 1,420 SF - 1957
15311 Dewey Street	94579: \$780,000 2 BD - 1,331 SF - 1950
15 Dorchester Avenue	94577: \$820,000 4 BD - 1,582 SF - 1944
14372 Hemlock Street	94579: \$889,000 4 BD - 1,700 SF - 1952
1171 Oaks Boulevard	94577: \$1,125,000 3 BD - 2,626 SF - 1940

TOTAL SALES: 12

LOWEST AMOUNT: \$398,000 MEDIAN AMOUNT: \$740,000  
HIGHEST AMOUNT: \$1,125,000 AVERAGE AMOUNT: \$734,333

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## Mortgage Rates Move Down

Long-term fixed mortgage rate edged down last week, according to Freddie Mac's weekly nationwide survey.

Thirty-year fixed-rate mortgages averaged 2.73 percent for the week ending Jan. 28, down from 2.77 percent the week before. A year ago at this time, the 30-year rate averaged 3.51 percent.

Fifteen-year fixed-rate mort-

gages averaged 2.20 percent, down from 2.21 percent.

Five-year hybrid adjustable-rate mortgages (ARMs) averaged 2.80 percent, unchanged from a week earlier.

"As the market reacts to a new administration in Washington and COVID-19 driven economic malaise, mortgage rates continued to decrease this week, just slightly," said Sam

Khater, Freddie Mac's Chief Economist.

"Even as house prices increase at the fastest rate we've seen in years, competition to buy is strong given the low inventory that exists across the country. The fact that there are not enough homes to meet demand is going to be an ongoing issue for the foreseeable future."

## Bay East Realtors Announce Award Winners

Several local real estate professionals were recognized as this year's award winners during the 2021 Bay East virtual Inaugural event on Jan. 28.

June Burckhardt with Legacy Real Estate in Fremont received the Realtor of the Year award for demonstrating the highest level of integrity and commitment to the real estate profession.

Louise Lovewell with RE/Max Accord in Castro Valley received the Good Neighbor Award. This award recognizes

a member making a positive contribution to their communities. Lovewell has been a Bay East member for more than 40 years and, in 1986, helped found Building Futures for Women and Children, a shelter program for homeless women and children.

Leah Nishi with Farmers Insurance in Alameda, received the Bay East 2020 Affiliate of the Year Award.

Jennifer Branchini with Compass Real Estate in Pleasanton

received the Outstanding Leader Award.

For the first time, three Bay East members, Nancie Allen, Sheila Cunha, and Steve Medeiros, received the John A. Deadrich Distinguished Service Award for their extraordinary contributions during 2020.

The Bay East Association of Realtors is a trade association serving more than 5,800 residential and commercial real estate professionals throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

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# Weed Control; When Can I Plant Seeds?

By Buzz Bertolero  
Special to the Forum

**Q** What tips can you give me for controlling the weeds in my two-year-old sheet-mulched front garden? I've heard that vinegar and liquid soap works.

**A** It happens every year. As soon as the rainy season begins, the unwanted vegetation pops up everywhere. The dormant weed seeds that have laid dormant for months start germinating.

The best advice for this annual task is to begin controlling seedlings early while they're tiny and *don't procrastinate*. They're growing slowly now, but just wait. Longer days and warmer temperatures will trigger the growth.

Once Daylight Savings Time starts (March 14 this year), the weeds accelerate quickly.

The two primary methods of controlling weeds are (1) manually with a hoe or (2) with

a herbicide. The significant advantage of starting early is that you can hoe a big area quickly with no sweat. Herbicides cover a much large space when the weeds are tiny.

For seasonal weeds and grasses, vinegar and soap will work. However, many of today's organic herbicides use a combination of citric acid and essential oils of rosemary, cinnamon, wintergreen, clove, and other plants.

These are non-selective, so you would not apply them to your lawn or ground cover. Their mode of action is to burn the tissue causing the plants to die. All of these products have to be reapplied as necessary throughout the growing season.

I'm going to assume that a drip system is being used to water the plants. This would eliminate applying a pre-emergent herbicide that would kill the weed seeds before they germinate. After two years, the sheet mulch has deteriorated significantly.



You might want to think of updating it if you have a significant number of reoccurring weeds.

*Note:* Sheet mulching, also known as composting in place, mimics nature by breaking down organic material from the topmost layers down.

The simplest form of sheet mulching consists of applying a bottom layer of decomposable material, such as cardboard or newspapers, to the ground to kill existing vegetation and sup-

press weeds (from Wikipedia). You'll also find it referred to as "lasagna gardening."

**Q** Can you tell me when it is safe to plant seeds? I don't want to be too early.

**A** The timing depends on what you're planting. Carrots, beets, turnips, lettuce are planted year-round in the ground or containers. Tomatoes and peppers are

best started in flats along with the other summer vegetables.

The same is true with seasonal color. You should figure on eight weeks from the time you sow the seed until you plant in the open ground. Seeds started today in flats should be ready in late April.

The benefit of starting seedlings in flats is that you are only transplanting the most vigorous plants. I'd avoid stating Pansies, Violas, and Iceland Poppies, as they will fade when the tem-

peratures get warm. Instead, I would start Marigolds, Petunias, Impatiens, Vinca, and others. They will grow and flower in the summer and fall.

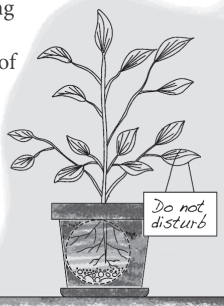
Buzz Bertolero is an Advanced California Certified Nursery Professional. The Dirt Gardener's website is [www.dirtgardener.com](http://www.dirtgardener.com) and questions can be sent by email to [buzz@dirtgardener.com](mailto:buzz@dirtgardener.com).



## Houseplant dormancy

A strange state sometimes comes upon some houseplants. Dormancy is a period of rest that starts when plants, sensing the days are becoming shorter, reduce their need for light. This slows all of the plant's life processes. New foliage will stop appearing, and existing leaves may even fall off. Roots will continue to get nutrients, but water should be reduced at this time, and you should not fertilize the plant. Watch for pests. - Brenda Weaver

Source: [planethouseplant.com](http://planethouseplant.com), [housebeautiful.com](http://housebeautiful.com)



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## Castro Valley Statistics

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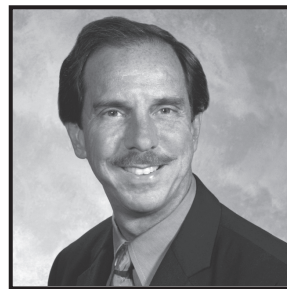
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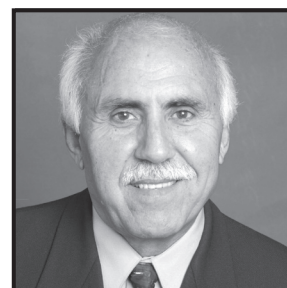
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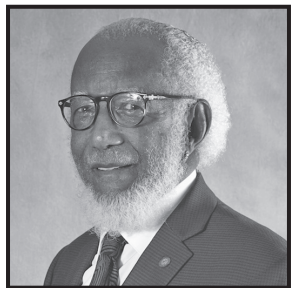
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## Make Your Home a Sanctuary – Even If COVID-19 Arrives on Your Doorstep

Winter has brought with it a resurgence in COVID-19 cases. And while the rollout of preventive vaccines has begun, the manufacture and delivery of sufficient doses to inoculate all Americans will take months. Because the disease can be unpredictable, everyone should take precautions to mitigate its spread, especially when it makes an appearance at home.

While the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends physical distancing, mask-wearing and other health-related measures, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) also recommends additional guidance when a household member is known to be infected, to help reduce risk to other household members. Filtrete Brand, a leading air filtration brand of 3M, has also made some of this information available at [Filtrete.com/3M](http://Filtrete.com/3M).

First, prepare a clean sanctuary within your home, either an isolation space – for someone who has contracted COVID-19 – or a protected space – for someone who may be at high risk of getting the

coronavirus.

Location is especially important. When the weather is warmer, the ideal isolation space should be on a low floor; in cooler months, a high floor. However, for protected spaces, the location should be just the opposite: on a high floor in warmer weather, and on a low floor in chilly weather. The reason for this is to prevent having air naturally gravitate towards protected spaces as a result of seasonal temperature differences.

Earmarking space is a good start. To further optimize the space for preventing the spread of infection, you can address these key elements as applicable to your home, understanding there is variation in home construction, HVAC systems, and climate:

- **Windows:** Keep windows closed as much as possible throughout the home. In an isolation space, use a window-installable product to provide exhaust ventilation. In a protected space, supply filtered, outdoor air.

- **Doors:** For an isolation or protected space, always keep the door closed. For added safety, install a draft stopper

under the door or hang plastic sheets in front of the room's entrance.

- **Vents:** If you have a forced-air heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system, seal all vents in the isolated or protected space. By doing so, you'll prevent its air from entering other rooms. However, if the room you select has the home's only HVAC return vent, it may be wisest to choose another room.

- **Portable heating/cooling:** If you're able to seal off all vents, you may require a portable room heater or air conditioner so that thermal conditions can remain comfortable.

- **Private bathroom:** If possible, designate a private bathroom for use only by the occupant of the separate room. For a protected space, only run the bathroom exhaust fan when the facilities are in use. For an isolated space, run the bathroom exhaust fan continuously at high speed.

- **Air purification:** A system such as the Filtrete Air Purifier with HEPA filtration can help capture unwanted air particles, including viruses and bacteria, in a protected space. Be sure to change the filter regularly,

per instructions or according to the device's electronic filter life indicator. While Filtrete Air Purifier Filters don't stop or prevent the transmission of COVID-19, they do improve

indoor air quality.

For more information on preparing a clean sanctuary at home, visit [www.Filtrete.com/3M](http://www.Filtrete.com/3M).

To stay up to date, consult

the CDC and other health authorities, as well as ASHRAE for the latest guidelines, updates and recommended precautions around COVID-19.

- Statepoint

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This Monthly Section will run the first Wednesday and Thursday of every month in the Castro Valley Forum and the San Leandro Times.

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FREE PROGRAM SATURDAY

## Black Family Genealogy

For African-Americans, researching their ancestral roots — the paths to uncovering and documenting family stories — may be hard to find.

In many cases, key documents and information may never have been recorded in the first place, or even actively suppressed over time. Nonetheless, the strength and beauty of Black family heritage shines down through the generations.

In honor of the 2021 Black History Month theme, “The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity,” speakers Alvis Ward, Jr. and Felicia Addison will offer guidance and expertise on how to help crack the code in researching Black family genealogy.

Both Ward and Addison are

members of the African-American Genealogical Society of Northern California.

The free Zoom program will be presented this Saturday, Feb. 6, at 11 a.m. and will last for one hour, followed by a Q&A session with the speakers.

To register or for more information, visit [bit.ly/AfAmGenealogy2021](http://bit.ly/AfAmGenealogy2021). Suggested donation is \$10.

This program is presented by the Hayward Area Historical Society, in partnership with the Women’s Ministry of Palma Ceia Baptist Church and the Eden Rose Chapter of The Links, Inc. partnership with the Women’s Ministry of Palma Ceia Baptist Church and the Eden Rose Chapter of The Links, Inc.

## COVID: Hospitalizations

*continued from front page*

Last week’s update for County Supervisors revealed 404 people were hospitalized countywide with COVID-19 and that even though there were 109 patients

needing ICU care, the county’s capacity of available beds for the extremely sick was more than 32 percent; in contrast to about 23.4 percent availability within the rest of the Bay Area.

## Baywood: Vaccinations

*continued from front page*

Residents also receive a weekly newsletter at their doorstep containing word games and puzzles, as well as leisure activities, in-

cluding houseplant kits, beading materials, coloring pages, DVDs, books and magazines, and crafts.

For more information, visit [www.baywoodcourt.org](http://www.baywoodcourt.org).

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FREDZ@EBPUBLISHING.COM

### No CV Space Large Enough for Chick-fil-A

Editor:

I have children that live in the Austin, Texas area and have been to a few Chick-fil-A’s. From what I have seen there is no room for this drive-in anywhere in Castro Valley. You need a large enough area to stage 25 to 40 cars waiting for their orders.

The only places that has that kind of room are the Southland and Bayfair malls. And they can’t be in the middle of the mall. It has to be on the outside area to accommodate all the cars that are waiting for their meal.

A real good example of this is on Hesperian next to Wal-Mart at the In and Out Burger, and the cars waiting for their take out, usually about 20 to 25 cars.

Now, with that knowledge, where would you put this business in Castro Valley?

—Leroy Milam, Castro Valley

### CVSan Oil Change Program Should Be Less Wasteful

Editor:

“Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle” is a mantra we should all live by to do our part for the environment. Shouldn’t Castro Valley Sanitary District be held to the same — if not higher — standard?

Their Used Motor Oil Exchange Program is a wasteful example of a program that generates two times as much plastic waste than it should. The program will deliver you 2 one-gallon jugs to fill with used oil — even though almost every crankcase in passenger cars has a 5-quart (1.25 gallons) capacity.

I have written to them many times to urge them to source/provide 5-quart jugs to no avail. These jugs definitely exist, as most manufacturers sell that size, in addition to single quarts.

“Hey, why don’t I just use the 5-quart jug that I bought my new oil in?” you ask. Because CVSan won’t accept those — they’ll only take the jugs they provide. Too bad, because I get bleach and orange juice jugs that could handle 5 quarts.

The annual oil-filter exchange program is a nice benefit, but the hoops you have to jump through, although necessary to prevent fraud, make it not worth the \$5.

With this jug situation, the easiest and best way to deal with your used oil and filters is to collect them yourself in whatever container you like, and take them to O’Reilly Auto Parts — they’ll even pay you for the oil!

Please join me in urging CVSan to source/provide 5-quart jugs to improve the efficiency of this program. They may attempt to reflect the blame onto Alameda County Industries, but the situation was the same with the previous service provider, Waste Management Inc.

In the end, it’s CVSAN’s responsibility and duty to then pressure these providers to do the right thing, and practice what they preach.

—Michael Hecker, Castro Valley



PHOTO COURTESY OF VOLARIS AIRLINES

**Michelle Fridman, Minister of Tourism for the State of Yucatán, celebrates the departure of Volaris’ commemorative flight from Merida to Oakland.**

## Volaris Opens New Route From Oakland to Yucatán

The Mexican state of Yucatán opened a new international route to the East Bay last week when Volaris Airlines started operations of a Mérida-to-Oakland route, which will connect the two destinations four times a week.

The carrier will fly Airbus A320 planes on the route, with arrivals in Mérida every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

Last week’s commemorative flight to Oakland was called “a firm step in the recovery of air

connectivity, after the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020” by Volaris officials.

The Ministry of Tourism, working with local authorities, began operating a Covid testing facility at the Mérida airport yesterday to fulfill U.S. testing requirements.

The East Bay offers immense tourism and commercial potential for Yucatán, which is known for its Gulf of Mexico beaches and Mayan ruins.

### Calls for Rodeo Laws Changes

Editor:

Three bills needing an author:

(1) Amend state rodeo law, Penal Code 596.7, to require an on-site veterinarian or Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) at all rodeos. The “on call” option is not working and animals are suffering needlessly;

(2) Ban the Mexican charreada’s brutal “steer tailing” event (outlawed in Alameda & Contra Costa Counties in 1993);

(3) Ban the rodeo’s non-sanctioned “wild cow milking contest,” children’s “mutton busting” event, and all animal “scrambles” which are cruel and dangerous for all concerned.

All legislators may be written c/o The State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814. Email pattern for all: senator.lastname@senate.ca.gov and assemblymember.lastname@assembly.ca.gov.

Let them hear from you!

—Eric Mills, coordinator  
Action for Animals, Oakland

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### HOROSCOPE by Salomé

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**ARIES (March 21 - April 19):** St. Valentine’s Day magic rules the entire week for romantic Rams and Ewes. Music, which is the food of love, is also strong. The weekend offers news both unexpected and anticipated.



**TAURUS (April 20 - May 20):** Your aspects favor the arts -- which the Divine Bovine loves, loves, loves. Also, for those looking for romantic love, Cupid is available for requests. After all, his mother, Venus, rules your sign.



**GEMINI (May 21 - June 20):** Loving commitments continue to grow stronger. Ditto budding relationships. A recent move to help start-up a new career-linked direction soon could begin to show signs of progress.



**CANCER (June 21 - July 22):** Single Moon Children might be eager to take that proverbial chance on love. But your more serious side will feel better if you take things slowly and give your moonstruck self more time.



**LEO (July 23 - August 22):** It’s a love fest for Leos and Leonas this week. Paired Cats might expect to be purr-fectly in sync. And with matchmaking friends, single Simbas searching for romance shouldn’t have too far to look.



**VIRGO (August 23 - Sept. 22):** More understanding on both sides can work miracles in restoring ailing relationships to health. Make the first move, and you’ll be closer to your much-wanted reunion.



**LIBRA (Sept. 23 - October 22):** Accept the fact that you are worthy of being loved, and you’ll find proof in what is revealed to you over the course of the week. Also accept a compliment offered with great sincerity.



**SCORPIO (October 23 - November 21):** Planning to take a new direction in life is exciting. And so is a new awareness of someone’s special affection. Expect a slow and mostly steady development of the situation.



**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21):** Although you might still feel you weren’t treated quite right in a recent matter, all that will work out in time. Meanwhile, enjoy the week’s special qualities and potentials.



**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19):** Deciding not to give up on a troubling romantic situation helps start the healing process. Expect to find some valuable insight into yourself as things move along.



**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18):** The week is filled with positive potentials, but it’s up to you to make the right choices. The advice of someone who truly cares for you and your well-being can be priceless.



**PISCES (Feb. 19 - March 20):** It’s a good time to make yourself available to possibilities of the romantic kind. Already paired? Good. In that case, be sure to reassure that special person of your feelings.

## In Loving Memory of Judy Ruffino

1940 ~ Jan. 30, 2021  
Resident of Castro Valley, CA  
since 1975.

Judy was an RN and worked for Alameda Co., Contra Costa Co., and Kaiser Hayward. Graduate of Ohio State and UC Berkeley 1970.

Beloved wife of Sam Ruffino for 48 years. Sons, Paul and Joseph. Granddaughter Melissa.

Family will celebrate her life at a later date.





## Should You File Federal Income Tax?

By Jim Miller  
SPECIAL TO THE FORUM

Whether or not you are required to file a federal income tax return this year actually depends on several factors: How much you earned last year (in 2020), the source of that income, your age and your filing status.

Here's a rundown of this tax season's IRS tax filing requirement thresholds. For most people, this is pretty straightforward.

If your 2020 gross income – which includes all taxable income, not counting your Social Security benefits (unless you are married and filing separately) – was below the threshold for your filing status and age, you may not have to file. But if it's over, you will.

- Single: \$12,400 (\$14,050 if you're 65 or older by Jan. 1, 2021).
- Married filing jointly: \$24,800 (\$26,100 if you or your spouse is 65 or older; or \$27,400 if you're both over 65).

• Married filing separately: \$5 at any age.

• Head of household: \$18,650 (\$20,300 if age 65 or older).

• Qualifying widow(er) with dependent child: \$24,800 (\$26,100 if age 65 or older).

To get a detailed breakdown on federal filing requirements, along with information on taxable and nontaxable income, call the IRS at 800-829-3676 and ask them to mail you a free copy of the "1040 and 1040-SR Instructions for Tax Year 2020," or you can get it online at IRS.gov.

### Check Here Too

There are, however, some other financial situations that can require you to file a tax return, even if your gross income falls below the IRS filing requirements.

For example, if you earned more than \$400 from self-employment in 2020, owe any special taxes like an alternative minimum tax, or get premium tax credits because you, your spouse or a dependent is enrolled in a Health Insurance Marketplace (aka Obamacare) plan, you'll need to file.

You'll also need to file if you're receiving Social Security benefits, and one-half of your benefits plus your other gross income and any tax-exempt interest exceeds



**I WANT YOU... TO FILE YOUR TAXES: If your 2020 gross income was below the threshold for your filing status and age, you may not have to file. But if it's over, you will.**

\$25,000, or \$32,000 if you're married and filing jointly.

To figure all this out, the IRS offers an interactive tax assistant tool on their website that asks a series of questions that will help you determine if you're required to file, or if you should file because you're due a refund. It takes less than 15 minutes to complete.

You can access this tool at IRS.gov/Help/ITA – click on "Do I Need to File a Tax Return?" Or, you can get assistance over the phone by calling the IRS helpline at 800-829-1040.

### Check Your State

Even if you're not required to file a federal tax return this year, don't assume that you're also excused from filing state income taxes. The rules for your state might be very different. Check with your state tax agency before concluding that you're entirely in the clear. For links to state tax agencies see Taxadmin.org/state-tax-agencies.

### Tax Prep Assistance

If you find that you do need to file a tax return this year, you can free file through the IRS at IRS.gov/FreeFile if your 2020 adjusted gross income was below \$72,000.

Or, if you need some help, contact the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (or TCE) program. Spon-

sored by the IRS, TCE provides free tax preparation and counseling to middle and low-income taxpayers, age 60 and older. Call 800-906-9887 or visit IRS.treasury.gov/freetaxprep to find out about services near you.

You can also get help through the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide service, a participant in the TCE program that provides free tax preparation in-person, online and by phone.

To find out about service options in your area, call 888-227-7669 or visit AARP.org/findtaxhelp. You don't have to be an AARP member to use this service.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org.

## Key Elder Law Numbers Updated for 2021

By Gene L. Osofsky, Esq.  
SPECIAL TO THE FORUM

Below are updated numbers for 2021 that are frequently used in our Elder Law practice and which may be of interest to clients:

Medi-Cal Spousal Impoverishment Numbers for 2021: The new Community Spouse Resource Allowance ("CSRA") is \$130,380. The Minimum Monthly Maintenance Needs Allowance ("MMMNA") for the "At-Home" Spouse is \$3,259.50.

The "CSRA" is the amount of savings or other countable resources, and the "MMMNA" is the amount of monthly income, which the At-Home spouse can retain when the Ill Spouse needs a Medi-Cal subsidy to help with the cost of nursing home care. The goal of Congress in setting these "safe harbors" was to avoid the spousal impoverishment of the At-Home spouse when the other needed care.

Aged & Disabled Federal Poverty Level Program: These are the monthly income thresholds; persons whose income is below these thresholds may qualify for No Share of Cost Medi-Cal when receiving Medi-Cal benefits at home:

Single Individual: \$1,468 (up from \$1,294); Couple: \$1,983 (up from \$1,747).

Gift and estate tax figures: Federal estate tax exemption: \$11.7 million for individuals, \$23.4 million for married couples;

Lifetime tax exclusion for gifts: \$11.7 million;

Generation-skipping transfer tax exemption: \$11.7 million;

Annual gift tax exclusion: \$15,000 (unchanged).

Long-Term Care Premium Deductibility Limits for 2021: The Internal Revenue Service has announced the 2021 limitations on the deductibility of long-term care insurance premiums from income.



Gene L. Osofsky

Any premium amounts above these limits are not considered to be a medical expense and hence are not deductible. The deductibility increases with age: Attained age before the close of the taxable year: Maximum deduction 40 or less = \$450; More than 40 but not more than 50 = \$850; More than 50 but not more than 60 = \$1,690; More than 60 but not more than 70 = \$4,520; More than 70 = \$5,640

Veterans Benefits To Qualify for Pension: Asset limit: \$130,773 (effective 12/1/2020)

Penalty Period Rate for Prior Gift Transfers: \$2,295. This number is divided into the value of any disqualifying gifts made within 3 years of application and the result is the number of months of disqualification from eligibility to receive a pension.

Maximum Monthly Pension Rates for Veterans or their surviving spouses who need the highest level of care in their care setting, i.e. Aid and Attendance: Single veteran \$1,936; Married veteran \$2,295; Surviving spouse of Veteran \$1,244; Vet married to Vet (both with A&A) \$3,071.75

Medicare Premiums, Deductibles and Copayments for 2021: Part B premium: \$148.50/month (was \$144.60); Part B deductible: \$203 (was \$198); Part A deductible: \$1,484 (was \$1,408); Co-payment for hospital

stay days 61-90: \$371/day (was \$352); Co-payment for hospital stay days 91 and beyond: \$742/day (was \$704); Skilled nursing facility co-payment, days 21-100: \$185.50/day (was \$176); Part B premiums for higher-income beneficiaries: Individuals with annual incomes above \$88,000 and married couples with annual incomes above \$176,000 will pay more, beginning at a monthly premium of \$207.80, and increasing to as much as \$504.90 per month for those with annual incomes above \$500K for singles and above \$750K for married couples.

Supplemental Security Income ("SSI") Benefits for 2021: The new monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payment benefit in California is: For a single person: \$954.72; For a married couple: \$1,598.14; For beneficiaries who are blind: a single person's monthly benefit is \$1,011.23 and a married couple's (where both are blind) is \$1,751. Where one is blind and one spouse is aged or disabled, the benefit is \$1,691.65.

Gene L. Osofsky is an Elder Law and Estate Planning attorney in the East Bay. Visit his website at [www.LawyerForSeniors.com](http://www.LawyerForSeniors.com).

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## ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

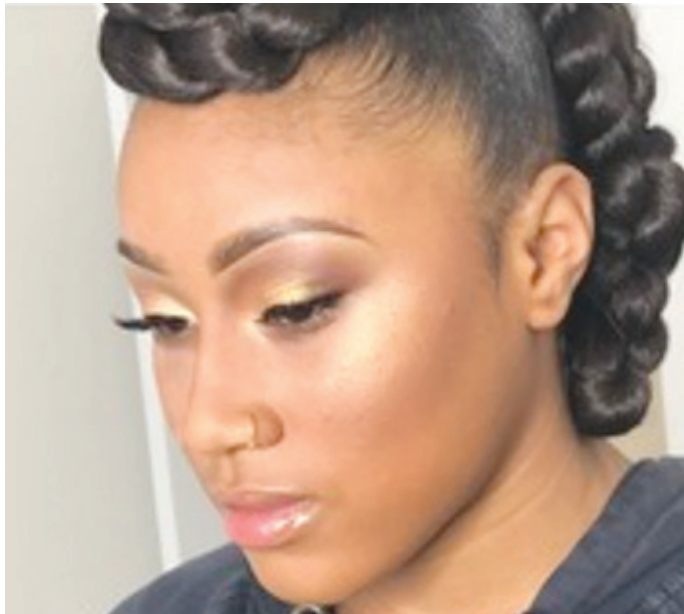
### Nyah Paulding

Nyah Paulding is our Castro Valley Athlete of the Week.

The 2020 Castro Valley High School graduate has made the 2021 Track and Field roster at San Francisco State University.

The 5-foot 9-inch sprinter specializes in the 100-meter and 200-meter races.

She studies Apparel and Merchandising at SFSU.



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## County Arts Groups Can Get Grants

Applications from nonprofit arts organizations are now being accepted for Alameda County's 2021 ArtsFund program for awards up to \$2,500.

The fund is available for many types of arts programs including dance, music, theater, visual arts, literature and media arts. The application deadline is Wednesday, March 31.

The Alameda County Arts Commission awarded grants of \$1,000 to \$2,500 to 45 nonprofit groups throughout the county last year.

The Commission staff will present two webinars to assist organizations in preparing their grant application. The online workshops will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 11 and at 10 a.m. on Friday, March 5.

The free workshops are open to the public and reservations are not required.

For details about how to join the webinars and to learn more about the ArtsFund Grant Program, visit [www.acgov.org/arts](http://www.acgov.org/arts) and click on "Programs." The Arts Commission staff can also be reached by email at [artscommission@acgov.org](mailto:artscommission@acgov.org) or by calling 510-208-9646.

Funding for the ArtsFund Grant Program is provided by Alameda County and by donations and individual contributions.

## Community Calendar

### ● Thursday, February 4: Case for a New Transbay Crossing

BART and Capitol Corridor (Amtrak) invite you to learn about Link21, a new Transbay Rail Crossing, at a webinar from 11 a.m. to noon tomorrow. Pre-register to participate with questions or comments, or simply watch the webinar live at [www.youtube.com/user/BayAreaCouncil](http://www.youtube.com/user/BayAreaCouncil). If you cannot attend, visit: [Link21Program.org](http://Link21Program.org) for info.

### ● Monday, February 8: MAC Meeting on Land Use

The Castro Valley Municipal Advisory Council will hold a virtual meeting at 6 p.m. on Monday via Zoom at: [us02web.zoom.us/j/94808181055](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/94808181055) or by phone at 669-900-9128. The agenda is available at: [acgov.org/bc/cvmac](http://acgov.org/bc/cvmac). Only items on the agenda may be acted upon, but anyone wishing to speak on an item not on the agenda may do so by using guidelines at: [acgov.org/cda/planning/documents/TeleconferencingGuidelinesforPublicHearings.pdf](http://acgov.org/cda/planning/documents/TeleconferencingGuidelinesforPublicHearings.pdf)

### ● Tuesday, February 9: Rotary's Efforts on Climate Change

Ron Diridon will describe the efforts of Rotary District 5170 on climate change, at the next meeting of the Rotary Club of Castro Valley at noon next Tuesday. Meetings take place via Zoom. More information is available at [castrovalleyrotary.org](http://castrovalleyrotary.org).

### ● Thursday, February 11: Virtual Valentine's Party

Join a special Virtual Valentine's Day Celebration on Feb. 11 as Spectrum Community Services, Concannon Vineyard and Truffle Shuffle invite you to a fun night making fresh gnocchi and enjoying Concannon Reserve wines from the comfort of your own kitchen, a benefit for Spectrum's Senior Meals Program. Get tickets now at [www.SpectrumCS.org](http://www.SpectrumCS.org) and check out an awesome video at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wc16zIBC-Zo&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wc16zIBC-Zo&feature=youtu.be)

### ● Tuesday, February 16: Science Lecture: Nuclear Fusion

Physicist John Perkins of the Lawrence Livermore National Lab will discuss nuclear fusion – a process that powers the sun, the stars and hydrogen bombs – at the next Castro Valley Science Lecture, at 6 p.m. on Feb. 16. His talk is being presented by the Castro Valley Educational Foundation and the Rotary Club of Castro Valley. Register for the Zoom link at [bit.ly/35FFfCn](http://bit.ly/35FFfCn).

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All our love, Mama and Denny

♥ **JOAN** ♥  
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♥ **TO MY VALENTINE** ♥  
♥ **JOAN SMITH** ♥  
ALL MY LOVE ROBERT JONES

♥ **JOAN SMITH** ♥  
Thank You For Being My True Love  
For All These Years!  
Your Sweetheart,  
Robert Jones

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