



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

SHADOW OF A DROUGHT

Story and photos by Luana Conley, with contributions by Damon Wood



Priscilla Walton

THE TIPPING POINT

As I write, I have good news, bad news, and possible future news that is up to you and me. For Carmel Valley is now at a tipping point.

First the good news. As you know, we may be about to enter the new normal as vaccinations increase and the number and severity of COVID-19 cases recede. Many people fled the congestion of the cities to come to Carmel Valley, seeking to find space, quiet, safety, and peace for their families. As a result, the value of homes in Carmel Valley increased greatly. New families moving to town are helping to keep our schools vibrant. The mix of different ages is healthy for our community. Our grocery stores, wineries, and shops stand to increase business, and this is a welcome relief. This situation presents an opportunity to begin to envision a post-COVID Carmel Valley. The Carmel Valley Association is determined to play a leading role in this process. Many of the new residents have joined CVA to protect the quiet and tranquil life style and the rustic farms and horse ranches that define it, eager to preserve what drew them here in the first place.

Now the bad news. The increase in visitors has brought greatly increased traffic and parking problems. Also, the upswing in the price of housing threatens the affordability of Carmel Valley that has allowed for a mix of people with different income levels and for those who work in Carmel Valley to live here, too.

The issue of vacation rentals now takes on even greater significance. The process of drafting a vacation rental ordinance for the unincorporated areas of Monterey County has dragged on for more than seven years



FRONT row, L to R: Barry Rowley, Danielle Carlson, Kevin Kenoyer, Bob Spadoni and Rod Neubert. BACK: Jim Fannin, Laurie Fannin, Damon Wood, Stacey Wood, Alan Crockett, Jackie Lautzenhiser and Laurie Hastings. Not pictured: Daniel Carmichael.

As we take joy in the renewal of spring, the promise of summer is tempered by another dry season and threat of fire. We now experience the apprehension of “fire season” replacing the pleasant expectations of summer fun and relaxation.

Old-fashioned barn-raising brought the agrarian communities together on projects too big for one family to tackle alone. Stacey Wood, a Robles del Rio resident, has created the modern-day version for Carmel Valley, with fire fuel mitigation our common goal. By volunteering in a well-managed program, with experienced direction, neighbors are able to contribute to making our locale safer, together.

Stacey Wood and her husband Damon chose Carmel Valley as their home five and a half years ago, ironically coming here for better air. They became uneasy after the Cachagua and Highway 68 fires started the same day they moved in, and the Soberanes Fire came within five miles of their home. After the destructive Camp Fire in Paradise, Stacey became

concerned about the evacuation policy here and posted an open letter online that gathered over 100 signatures. The response motivated Supervisor Adams’ office to coordinate public meetings of elected officials, agency leaders, and Monterey County Regional District Fire Chief Michael Urquides.

Long-time Robles resident Alan Crockett connected with Stacey, and with the sponsorship of the Fire Safe Council of Monterey County, they received a \$45,000 PG&E grant and began organizing volunteers to clear roadsides and remove lower limbs of trees in the commonly-owned Robles meadows. Stacey and Alan next formed a local chapter of the Firewise USA Program®, which assists communities in reducing their wildfire risk through organization, education, and fire fuel mitigation efforts. A committee was formed with core members Alan Crockett and Kevin Kenoyer of the CV Rotary, and the Robles and Rancho Tierra Grande neighborhoods became Certified Firewise Communities in December. The National Fire

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Thank you!

President's Letter, continued from Pg. 1

with no end in sight. The planning department revision requested by the board of supervisors has still not come back. The 2020/21 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury stated that "the County Board of Supervisors has allowed this ordinance development effort to drag on for far too long. This delay, combined with the lack of a proactive enforcement of current ordinances, has effectively exacerbated the problem over time."

In the meantime, the future of Rancho Canada Village remains uncertain. After years of litigation, appeals, and cross appeals, we have entered into settlement negotiations with Rancho Canada Village. We remain hopeful that a settlement can be reached that benefits Carmel Valley and supports the mission of CVA.

Finally, Saddle Mountain Recreational Vehicles and Campground Park, which offers affordable vacation housing to tourists, is having major impacts, including more traffic, overbuilding, over use, and lighting and noise excesses. CVA continues to try to ascertain who has jurisdiction for monitoring the area: the state or Monterey County.

All of this leads me to the possible future news that depends upon you and me. For now Carmel Valley is at a new tipping point. As we enter the new normal, the challenge will be to guide and moderate the rate of growth to equally benefit and integrate the long-term residents of the community and the new residents and to manage tourism in ways that the rural nature of Carmel Valley is preserved and the quality of life in Carmel Valley is not degraded. This is no easy task.

We encourage all of you to participate. And of course, we need you to continue to donate to our efforts to protect Carmel Valley's unique beauty and quality of life. We encourage you to shop locally to help our community survive and thrive. Do so with an abundance of caution and get out to enjoy our beautiful parks.



Poppies on the village airfield, photo by Kathy Sanders

Firewise, continued from Pg. 1

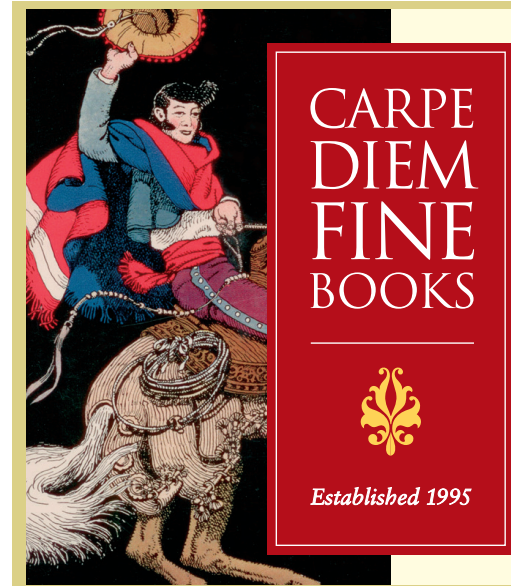
Protection Association provides Firewise communities proven measures to become more resistant to wildfire structural damage with grants, toolkits, and a homeowners' checklist. Robles Firewise is in the process of becoming a 501(c)(3) organization.

The program has now expanded to help homeowners who need help clearing their properties. I was grateful to be the first Robles homeowner to be scheduled for this second phase of the community effort, led by Rod Neubert and Kevin Kenoyer. The work done on a recent Saturday to clear leaves, brush, fallen branches, and low-hanging tree limbs made me feel so much more safe and secure, with a renewed appreciation of the power of community. A phenomenal amount of work was done by an able and experienced crew, a mix of Rotarians and neighbors.



Volunteers tool up, photos courtesy Firewise

When asked about why she participates, Laurie Hastings mentioned her love of community, her desire to keep us all safe, and enjoyment of the good fun of collaborating with neighbors and getting to know them better. A niche is available for every volunteer: some direct traffic, others are chain saw and tree experts, some bag leaves and haul brush, and others do technical chores or phone banking.



NINETY-SOMETHING ATHLETES STAY FIT IN AQUA CLASS

by Carolyn Rice

Three 90-something women in the Carmel Valley Athletic Club (CVAC) aqua class occupy an elite niche that other class members view with awe and admiration.

The CVAC aqua group ranges in age from early 20s to the 90-year-olds and includes several men. Before the pandemic, class members gathered in the hot tub after class to talk books, movies, and current events along with many other topics. Now, they spread out over a large pool area, wear masks when entering and leaving the club, and are restricted from gathering in the hot tub together and singing, talking, or shouting to each other while exercising. However, the members continue to keep in touch by phone and email and are grateful they can still work out with instructors at the outdoor pool.

The most recent to join the group is Lori Chung, whose birthday was in February. "I've done aqua since 2004. I do it because after my surgery I have nerve damage in both legs, and aqua is about the only exercise I can do. I noticed when the club was shut down, I had lost muscle tone because I wasn't going to the pool." A few years back Chung had a double knee replacement in the Bay Area. Complications following her surgery put her in and out of intensive care for the next 18 months. Prior to the surgery Chung was an active tennis player and had taken up aqua to tone her muscles in preparation for the surgery. Upon her return to aqua class after about two years' absence, friends nicknamed her the Comeback Kid.

Another former tennis player, Dona Morley who will be 92 in May, has done aqua exercise for 23 years. She started when living in Belmont and had knee issues. "I could not believe how quickly it made me feel better all over." Following two knee replacements, she and her husband, Jack, moved to Carmel Valley in 2002 and joined CVAC. She credits aqua for "many happier years."

Frances Sackerman can be called an elite athlete. She skied, played tennis, and bicycled, including making a bicycling tour in France with her husband, Ralph. In 1972 she became a runner and calls running her best sport, completing 30 marathons and many 10Ks.

Have You Heard About the California Biodiversity Initiative?

by Paola Berthoin

California is a global biodiversity hotspot. The California Biodiversity Initiative was established in 2017 by Governor Jerry Brown, who brought together universities, conservation organizations, government agencies, and herbaria to develop "A Roadmap for Protecting the State's Natural Heritage." Included in that effort is "A Charter to Secure the Future of California's Native Biodiversity."

As part of this initiative, September 7 was established as California Biodiversity Day. It was on this day that Governor Brown directed the CA Department of Food and Agriculture and the Department of Fish and Game to partner in "protecting California's native vegetation and animals while restoring and protecting habitat." The Biodiversity Initiative roadmap outlines scientific and educational approaches already in use and proven to be effective in California. Specifically, the plan calls for work to

- ◆ **Map** California's native plants and natural communities, to best understand how to save them;
- ◆ **Seedbank** California's flora as a hedge against extinction;
- ◆ **Identify** California's Important Plant Areas and prioritize them for protection;
- ◆ **Adopt** native plant gardening horticulture and educate the public about biodiversity."

This last goal is where you and your neighborhood come in. When preparing the land around your homes to be more fire resilient keep in mind the following.

Remember the value of the native plants for the beautiful plants that they are and the critical ecosystem services they provide free of charge. Manage vegetation appropriately and at the right time of year.

Remove invasive plants. They crowd out native plants that animals, birds, insects, spiders, and pollinators depend on, which, in turn, we depend on. Plant firewise natives in your garden. The balance of the scales has tipped to the point where the natural flora and fauna need our help.

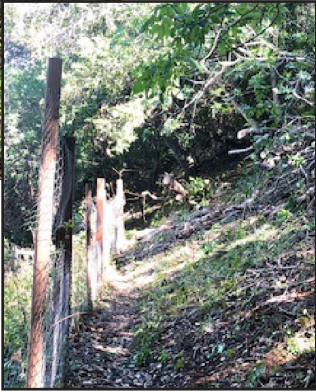
According to the Biodiversity Initiative website, "Together we will show the world how an enlightened civilization, applying sound data and shared commitment, lives in a diverse and productive land. Please join the effort. Your good ideas and unique perspective are needed. The opportunity is great, and the time is now for California's remarkable natural diversity!"

You are encouraged to join these efforts at californiabiodiversityinitiative.org.

BEFORE
Volunteer braves brambles and dead limbs.



AFTER
Team effort clears tangled brush



Robles Firewise's most ambitious project yet is a public event at the CV Village Firehouse, Saturday, June 12. "Protecting your Home from Wildfire: How to Make your Home Fire-Wise" is from 11a.m. to 3 p.m., and will include demonstrations, education, entertainment for the kids, and prizes. Wildfire Community Preparedness Day is May 1 and starts off the annual national campaign to encourage people and organizations everywhere to raise awareness and reduce risks. Visit roblesfirewise.com to access resources, to sign up for info, and to volunteer. There couldn't be a better time to get involved! Stacey says, "Every house makes a difference for everyone on that street, even one house at a time." There is a need for everyone of varying abilities, talents and for donations!

Contact roblesfirewise@gmail.com for more details.

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Frances Sackerman, Dona Morley, Lori Chung. Photo by James Kellogg, General Manager, CVAC

In 2012 she fell on the tennis court and hurt her hip. At that time she quit tennis and since then took up aqua, which she does three times a week, walking on the other days.

James Kellogg, CVAC general manager, said what allowed the club to open during the pandemic for aqua and other club activities was its ample outdoor space and its strict reservation system. "We use temperature checks and have the ability to contact trace and have worked to go above and beyond any required measures set out by the County Health Department."

NEW EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM FORMED IN CARMEL VALLEY

by Greg Profeta

Wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters have devastated our communities. Although we can't predict when and where these will occur, we can prepare for them. Many communities, along with state and local authorities, have begun to shift the focus to preparedness and training to take a more proactive approach following the 1987 Whittier Narrows Earthquake. The primary focus of Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is education and training of public and government sectors in disaster preparedness, to take care of themselves, their families, and their neighbors in the event of a disaster. In 1994, FEMA adopted and expanded the Los Angeles Fire Department's CERT program to be available nationwide for all applicable hazards.

Monterey County has adopted this program and has established teams in Monterey,



Photos by Isabelle Preti, CERT instructor.

Pacific Grove, Oak Hills, Carmel, and Big Sur. As of February 13th, 2021, Carmel Valley has now graduated its first team of 16 members, who work directly under the authority of Monterey County Office of Emergency Services in cooperation with Regional Fire, Cal Fire, Monterey County Sheriff's Office, and other local authorities.

All of the CV CERT members have been trained in FEMA disaster response skills such as fire safety, fire suppression, light search and rescue, medical triage and treatment, mass casualty incidents, and disaster psychology. These skills not only prepare the members and their families for disasters, but also to stand by to assist any of the above-mentioned agencies if they are overwhelmed or unable to respond to communities because of lost power, lost communications, or other disasters. Having a team in Carmel Valley is particularly important given the limited access and size of its area going from the mouth of the valley to the Cachagua and Jamesburg area.

When a disaster strikes, professional first responders may be overwhelmed or unable to respond immediately to their communities. This is where our CERT



team and its members are available to give initial support and post-support for many agencies. Examples of recent CERT activities include search and rescue efforts, storm damage assessment, traffic control, evacuation support, fire strike lookout, pandemic support, post-disaster support (Carmel and Dolan fires), and mutual aid to local police.

We are so very proud to welcome these outstanding community volunteers to the Carmel Valley Team: Kari Bernardi, David Burbidge, Melanie Corbett, Alan Crockett, Cheryl Fraenzl, Jeff Hawkins, Janice Hawkins, Noel Jensen, Cheryl Kinney, Geneviève Leblanc, Trevor Lin, Candace Lutian, Aletha Parker, and Captains Greg and Carolyne Profeta.

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HORSIN' AROUND THE VALLEY

by C.S. Noel

KNOCK KNOCK! Summer is at your door, and it wants you to saddle up!

Been dreaming of trails in Garland Park or maybe finding your older horse a steady turnout companion? If so, you might want to consider opening your heart and horse pasture to a new partner from the Monterey County SPCA Horse Adoption program.

Horsin' Around caught up with Monterey County SPCA President & CEO, Scott Delucchi, who spoke about the horse adoption program, saying, "There aren't many SPCAs that also care for horses, only a couple in the entire country. They don't because they need space, a barn program, and experienced staff who understand horses and know about care. It also takes community support. All the things this SPCA does is due to donations. Many other groups must focus more narrowly because of all this."

We have a treasure here: our own local SPCA, dedicated to helping horses with over fifty years of horse adoption experience. The SPCA has had everything from Morgans to mustangs and ponies to pintos. If it's out there, it's probably trotted through their barn door.

Jamie Lima, SPCA's barn manager, told us more about the adoption program. "The average stay for a horse is a year, and it is two to six months before they can be adopted. Depending on their condition, this time frame



Rizzo, a registered Morgan, is one of many fine horses available through the SPCA's Horse Adoption program. He's pictured here with barn specialist, Josie Odello, at the SPCA's equine facility. Photo courtesy SPCA

can vary greatly. Some may be un-muscled with signs of poor nutrition but have had basic care. Some are there through no fault, just owner circumstances. Some come in due to neglect. On average it's unbalanced hooves, lackluster coat, that kind of thing. Just a little rough around the edges, nothing a little TLC won't solve."

Lima says, "Right now we have a titled mustang, and he is being ridden under saddle, and out on the trails getting comfortable.

Another horse we have now had been a companion for another horse. Some have been here for three years or longer, and all can stay with the SPCA as long as needed to find a good match."

Jamie and her team take the time to find out exactly what a person is looking for. "We want to find them a long-term match," she says. Adopters are encouraged to meet all the on-site horses through the fence, with lots of time to think about any horse they focus in on. Multiple visits are recommended. Adopters get a comprehensive packet containing the horse's history, vaccine records, pictures, and more.

Adopter Martha Hogan speaks enthusiastically about her SPCA horse. One day, when she was volunteering, cleaning and filling water buckets, a young mare reached through the fence to see what she was doing. Hogan was drawn to the horse's inquisitive and outgoing personality. "She lit a spark under me," says Hogan, who couldn't stop thinking about her. Hogan has had her beautiful Morgan-cross mare, Raven, for six years now and especially enjoys taking her out on the trail as well as riding in the arena, saying with gratitude, "She was an unexpected gift. I'm happy when I'm riding my horse, and that's the way it should be!"



Sunset at Baja Cantina, photo by Mibs McCarthy

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CVA ZOOMS AHEAD~Into Another Year of Activity

by *Sandy Schachter*

Another pandemic challenge met and vanquished! The Carmel Valley Association General Meeting, scheduled annually in March, took place on March 28, 2021--not in the usual setting of a bright and sunny conference room, but in the comfort of members' homes, via Zoom.

Even on a beautiful spring day, more than 60 participants heard President Pris Walton discuss CVA's current activities and plans for the future. She also introduced new board members Marianne Gawain and John Heyl and announced the executive board for 2021: Pris Walton, President; Rick Manning, Vice President; Sandra Schachter, Secretary; and Mibs McCarthy, Treasurer.

Special guests Fifth District Supervisor Mary Adams and State Senator John Laird followed with a conversation on the impact of state legislature on Carmel Valley issues such as fire prevention, water management, affordable housing, and the COVID pandemic. Questions from the participants elicited information on biodiversity, regional water supply, the impact of environmental regulations on fire prevention, residential fire protection systems, accessory dwelling units, workers' compensation insurance, the Public Utilities Commission, accountability of local government agencies, the River Free project, and county evacuation plans.

We missed the homemade cookies and coffee and the chance to indulge in informal but earnest conversation with other members, but we hope to enjoy those again next year.

Page 1 banner photo of lilac on a fence by Kim Williams



Kathy Sanders captured this photo of a Mid Valley egret.

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