



PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear CVA Members and Friends,

This will be my last column as president of the Carmel Valley Association. I write today to express my great pride in our organization and to announce my decision after seven years to step down as president, effective April 1. Although this will be my last term as president, I will still remain active on the CVA board as President Emerita.

Priscilla Walton

Serving as president has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I have truly enjoyed getting to know so many of you over the years as we worked together to protect the beauty, rural character, and natural resources of this extraordinary place in which we live.

The past seven years on the board have been fulfilling well beyond my expectations. When I joined the board in 2009, I was not sure what impact I could make on the organization. The nexus between governing an organization and effecting positive change in the community was not entirely clear to me at that time. I came in with the hope of not only "making a difference" but also becoming a better community member by giving in any and every way I could - all while further advancing the mission of a wonderful organization.

What has become abundantly clear to me is that the spirit and practice of voluntarism is something that can collectively improve the human community. I drew inspiration from you, the wonderful people of Carmel Valley, as you shared your passion, expertise, talent, and love of this valley. CVA exists only because of you, and Carmel Valley

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DRAFT EIR FOR MID-VALLEY SHOPPING CENTER PRESENTS TWO ALTERNATIVES

by Marianne Gawain



The 2019 community survey showed overwhelming support for maintaining the integrity of the existing Olof Dahlstrand architecture, above. CVA photo

Whether we've been away on local errands or traveled farther afield, it always feels wonderful to return to Carmel Valley. We know we're home when we see our gently curving river, its banks lined with cottonwoods, and look up to the oaks and chaparral on our hillsides. Saddle Mountain, Snively's Ridge and, to the far east, Chews Ridge, set their familiar profiles against the sky. The built environment is an important part of our Valley community, too: think of local landmarks like the Hatton Barn, September Ranch, the CV Community Park and Youth Center, or Mid-Valley Shopping Center, home of the vibrant Sunday farmers' market.

In 2019 Carmel Valley residents came to a renewed appreciation of the Mid-Valley Shopping Center when its owners, the Stanley Group, suddenly launched a functional and aesthetic redo of this community shopping area. Locals were startled to see bright white paint covering portions of the sandstone-aggregate structure. Fortunately, work was ordered suspended when it was determined that appropriate permits had not been obtained.

Subsequently a heavily-attended meeting organized by Supervisor Mary Adams between the center's owners and their architects and community members only highlighted the divergence in perspectives as to whom the shopping center should serve and how it should look. The Carmel Valley residents were passionate and united in demanding that the Mid-Valley Center should comport with the design guidelines of the Carmel Valley Master Plan and that it should continue to be a service center for locals rather than a destination for tourists.

Despite this opposition, the Stanley Group and its architects propose extensive changes to the Mid-Valley Shopping Center, including wrapping the aggregate columns in hardy board material, removing covered breezeway elements, modification of rooflines, and repainting with new colors. Approval of such major changes can be granted by the County Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors only after consideration of an environmental impact report. The required draft environmental impact report was available for public comment through January

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A TREASURED TREE: How a Local Couple Turned a Tradition to Community Benefit



Edie Wiltsee at home with her treasured trees

by C.S. Noel

Local residents Lamont and Edie Wiltsee were Christmas-ing in front of a cozy fire in 2019, thinking about how they would keep busy in the new year. One of the first tasks would be putting away their treasured family heirloom, a beautiful wooden tree that had graced 63 Christmas seasons and was ingeniously designed with spots to hang ornaments, as well as shelves to display decorations and gifts. It was then that Edie came up with an idea for sharing this lovely and unique tree with everyone.

It was an idea that led the couple on a merry adventure and resulted in establishing a new start-up manufacturing company called "A Treasured Tree" to reproduce this handmade item. All proceeds from the venture would be given to local non-profits benefiting the community.

With no background in starting a small business or in manufacturing, but armed with curiosity, creativity, and determination, the Wiltsees discovered a bounty of local resources which helped make their vision come true. They are eager to spread the word to budding entrepreneurs that our area is blessed with great organizations funded to help folks with ideas for starting a business.

Their first big step was developing a business plan. The Wiltsees received invaluable mentoring via the Small Business Development Center from volunteer Bob Kramer. As the project took shape, the Wiltsees added a second item, a light and versatile acrylic tree. Next, Kramer referred them to CSUMB's business development programs, where professors Amir Attia and Dante DiGregorio provided expertise in design, logo, and marketing strategies. Edie said, "They have a wonderful program, and I can't praise them enough. They have professors that will talk to you about how to start a small business and will show you how." Rancho Cielo, a facility in Salinas that works with at-risk youth, painted the tree prototypes for a reasonable price.

The Wiltsees have footed core expenses such as for design and manufacturing and for supporting small local businesses and "Made in U.S." The first trees were sold late last year by the Carmel Valley Community Chapel Benefit Shop. With 37% of income covering costs, there was 63% to be donated to local non-profits.

Lamont and Edie readily share what they've learned from this experience. Lamont said, "One of our biggest challenges was taking a handmade gift into the realm of mass production. We started producing prototypes, and each one solved some problems but made others apparent. We had to keep looking at each problem as an opportunity and use it to determine the next step."

When asked what advice they had for others, Lamont and Edie said enthusiastically, "Go for it! Don't look at what you don't have; focus on what you do have. Do an asset inventory: a helpful brother-in-law, a good idea, local entities providing experienced mentors. Find something that you can commit to, love, and want to get into, and just go for it."

To find out more about the Wiltsees' experience, and how you can do it too, Edie & Lamont can be contacted at: ediewiltsee@atresuredtree.com or llamontwiltsee@atresuredtree.com.

10, 2022. It can be found online or at the Carmel Valley branch library. <https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-a-h/housing-community-development/planning-services/current-major-projects/mid-valley-shopping-center-pln190140>

The conclusion of the draft EIR is clear. It states that the project proposal “would ‘materially alter’ the historical significance of the Mid-Valley Shopping Center, resulting in a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.” Without mitigation, the project’s impact is found to be significant and unavoidable—and no mitigation is proposed by the project applicants. **Therefore, a return to baseline conditions, that is, no project, is Alternative #1 set forth in the draft EIR for consideration by the Planning Commission.**

As part of the EIR development process, consultants Painter Restoration conducted a Historic Resource Evaluation of the site for the county. They concluded that the Mid-Valley Shopping Center is significant for its design, its cohesive architectural expression, and its association with regionally-prominent architect Olof Dahlstrand. Working from criteria established in the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Historic Preservation, Painter Restoration noted some key features that, if retained, might allow for limited changes to the center that would not violate its historical integrity. **This option would require development of new plans by the applicants and a new review process by the county. This is the Alternative #2 put forth in the draft EIR.**

With completion of the public comment period and finalization of the EIR, the project is expected to be referred to the county’s Historic Resources Review Board for consideration in February. The CVA’s Land Use Committee and its board will continue to monitor developments related to the shopping center and to keep the community informed as we advocate for a service complex that is compatible with Carmel Valley’s architectural history, natural environment, and economic needs.



Proposed Stanley Group design alteration for Mid Valley shopping center

ParkIT! Program Plans to Address Point Lobos Access

by Andy Sudol



South facing view of Marathon Flats project site from DD&A study. The Initial Study will be circulated for agency and public review during a 30-day review period and is available here: <https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/2021100338>.

The growing popularity of Point Lobos State Natural Reserve has led to increased safety concerns as visitors’ vehicles are often parked along the highway near the entrance, while overuse has also led to the degradation of natural resources.

To address these issues the California Department of Parks and Recreation in October 2021 drafted an initial study called the ParkIT! Shuttle Program & Day-Use Reservation System. The study was prepared by Denise Duffy and Associates, an environmental consulting firm in Monterey.

The plan consists of two main parts. The first is a parking and shuttle service with parking near the Crossroads Shopping Center and Palo Corona Regional Park. The Palo Corona shuttle stop is proposed at the existing parking lot located south of Carmel Valley Road at the former Rancho Cañada Golf Course. The second part is a reservation system for access to the park itself.

The ParkIT! Program proposal consists of three distinct elements: 1) construction of an alternative parking facility located on a portion of vacant land commonly known as Marathon Flats, near the Crossroads Shopping Center, south of Rio Road; 2) temporary use of the Blue Roof Office Buildings’ parking lot and/or Palo Corona Regional Park parking lot while the Marathon Flats facility is under construction; and 3) shuttle service between Marathon Flats (or temporarily from the Blue Roof Office Buildings’ parking lot), Rancho Canada,

Point Lobos, and the public access point to San Jose Creek trailhead when it opens.

The reservation system will require all visitors other than State Parks staff, Point Lobos Foundation staff, and docents on duty to have a reservation for one of four locations: in-reserve parking, offsite parking at the Marathon Flats Facility, Palo Corona, or walk-in. Visitors can request a reservation online or in person. State Parks will implement a public outreach program to inform visitors that a reservation will be necessary to access Point Lobos. Outreach will include updated signage, information on State Park’s website, press releases, and other similar methods. If, during park operations, the State Parks department observes adverse impacts because of visitor overuse, State Parks would implement adaptive management strategies to mitigate and minimize the impacts.

ParkIT! and State Parks are working on securing funding and the required coastal development permit for construction of the parking lot. State Parks is working on contracting with a vendor for the reservation system.

The CVA board has expressed its support for this plan and has recommended that local residents be given special consideration for priority access, that cyclists be included in the plan, and that Monterey-Salinas Transit be considered as a partner linking commuters.

More information may be obtained from the California Department of Parks and Recreation at (831) 649-2839.

Global Help Available to Preserve Our Night Sky

by John Heyl



Hey, stargazers! Did you know a small telescope can be borrowed from the Carmel Valley regional library branch? It will let you see the moon up close and can reveal the rings of Saturn and some gaseous clouds in the Orion Nebula, among other night sky joys. The library has not been able to lend it out during Covid restrictions but may be able to start again this spring. What a great activity on a clear night!

Anyone who lives in Carmel Valley and looks up at night has the joy of knowing that there is a big awe-inspiring cosmos out there. Many of us, though, are just beginning to hear about the **International Dark Sky Association** (IDA), based in Tucson, AZ. Before we moved here, my wife and I lived in Flagstaff, AZ, home of Lowell Observatory and one of the first Dark Sky Cities recognized by the IDA.

We found our dream retirement home in the Valley just after the summer solstice over a decade ago. During our house search, we were staying in a fog-bound Marina condo. After closing on the property, we spent a month doing what new homeowners do: assessing, painting, and deep cleaning our new home before moving in, and learning the difference between a snake hole and a gopher hole while enjoying the local trails.

Our first night on the property, we decided to camp out on the bedroom floor in sleeping bags. As we walked out onto the deck in the full darkness, we were overjoyed by the night sky; all the familiar constellations hung before us in the full circle of the early fall sky, and the Milky Way glowed brilliantly across from Garland.

I'm sure we weren't the first to enjoy the dark skies of our area, and we hope not to be among the last. Dark skies need preserving, like so many of the best natural aspects of living in semi-rural regions; fortunately, many people are willing to help keep our Valley rural.

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President's Letter, continued from Pg. 1

remains the special place that we all love only because of your dedication and commitment.

I believe our efforts together over these past seven years have continued to build on the strong foundation laid by those who came before me, and I am confident that CVA will only grow stronger in the years to come through the leadership of those that follow me.

We have a phenomenal board of directors from which new leaders are ready to take up the torch. We also have outstanding committees with CVA members who have worked tirelessly on traffic, natural resources, land use, and our annual events. I know that I am leaving CVA in very safe hands.

As I step down as president, I would like to thank my fellow board members for their hard work and commitment during the last seven years. I would also like to thank them and the CVA membership for trusting me with the responsibility of serving in one of the most challenging and rewarding positions I have known to date. CVA has been a vibrant force in participatory democracy, and I am certain that it will continue to be so going forward.

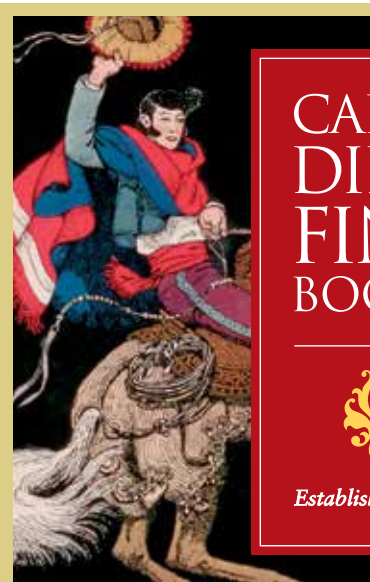
I wish to thank our District 5 Supervisor, Mary Adams, for her commitment to representing the residents of her district. She has unfailingly listened to her constituents and been responsive to the community needs brought before her and her excellent staff, especially Sarah Hardgrave. We have experienced much

improved government transparency and opportunity for involvement in the decisions that affect our lives. I also want to thank Erik Lundquist, for charting a new direction of openness, responsiveness, fairness, competency and real professionalism in the Monterey County Planning Department.

Organizing for the continuing challenge Carmel Valley faces will provide a great opportunity for new leaders to emerge and develop their skills. If you support the work of CVA but have not yet become involved, this is a great time to step up and become engaged with the network of dedicated and hardworking members seeking to protect and preserve the Carmel Valley.

We have won many important battles, but our work is never done. There are continuing issues, such as the developments at September Ranch and Rancho Canada, the Mid-Valley Shopping Center, short-term rentals, and special events. And these are just some of those issues that we know we will be facing in 2022 and beyond.

It is with much gratitude that I look at the sturdy roots we have cultivated together. From this work, a wealth of fruit will be harvested, so long as we continually nurture the Carmel Valley that we all love. It is up to all of us to help the next CVA president and the CVA board to continue this effort. Please join us now, and let's all get to work!



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ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND TO BE BUILT AT COMMUNITY YOUTH CENTER



by Amanda Bakker

The Tatum's Garden Foundation is bringing an exciting collaboration to Carmel Valley. After five years of legwork, the foundation has announced that Carmel Valley Community Youth Center (CVCYC) will soon be the home of a new fully accessible and inclusive playground, to be called "Tatum's Treehouse." I am the foundation's executive director and mother of Tatum, who is the playground's namesake. My

husband Shawn and I led the community effort to build Tatum's Garden in Salinas in 2013, which has since gone on to be recognized nationally and internationally and currently remains Monterey County's only inclusive and fully wheelchair accessible playground. I am a fourth generation native of the Salinas Valley and have a passion to give back to my community. And yet, since adapting to parenting a special needs

child, Shawn and I have become much more aware of places that are hard to access as a family, due to their lack of accessibility. One of the reasons I'm so excited to help bring an accessible playground to Carmel Valley is, to be honest, this area currently poses some challenges to accessibility. The things that make the Valley so beautiful and rustic—being nestled in the hills with restaurants and shops tucked around each bend—also make it a challenge to navigate in a wheelchair. Tatum's Treehouse will be a beautiful, safe, and fun destination for families like ours who would love to enjoy all Carmel Valley has to offer.

The partnership with CVCYC will be beneficial for both organizations, as the new playground will replace the much-loved but well-worn playground currently at CVCYC with a new, custom-designed playground featuring a whimsical, nature-inspired theme. It also helps further the mission of the Tatum's Garden Foundation, whose vision is "inspiring communities to foster abundant play for children of every ability." Every community should have an accessible and inclusive play space where children of all physical and mental abilities find a sanctuary to play side-by-side with their peers. That's what we are bringing to Carmel Valley, and we hope the vision continues to all areas of Monterey County.

This project officially launched last month, and fundraising has begun toward the projected \$850,000 playground budget, as well as the recruitment of volunteers for the steering committee and construction. I encourage locals to get involved. One of my favorite things about this process is that it is community-driven. The design was created with ideas from local schoolchildren, (including Tularcitos), and the project will be community-funded, building momentum towards the excitement of a Community Build, when we will need all hands on deck in a massive volunteer effort to construct the playground in just one week! The organizations are hopeful that this Community Build Week could happen as soon as fall 2022, dependent upon meeting their fundraising goal.

You can find more information, including a list of sponsorship opportunities and volunteer sign-ups at tatumstreehouse.com, and on social media @tatumstreehouse.

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GENERAL ELECTION NOTICE

It's time for our annual CVA Board of Directors' election. Current board members nominated for new three-year terms are Michael Kimes, Sandra Schachter, Andy Sudol, Lamont Wiltsee, and Jeff Wood.

Any CVA member in good standing may nominate other candidates by gathering 15 member signatures and submitting them by February 21st. If other nominations are submitted, ballots will be sent out by email (or postal service mail, if requested) by March 1st, with votes due back by March 14th. If there are no new petition candidates, the slate will automatically be appointed. The new board will elect its officers.

New terms begin on April 1st, and board members and officers will be introduced at the annual meeting.

Dark Sky, continued from Pg. 4

In May of 2019 Pris Walton wrote in the *Valley Voice* of existing regulations adopted by the county to help us reduce light pollution and let the starry sky be seen. In the May 2014 newsletter, Mibs McCarthy wrote about the Monterey Institute for Research in Astronomy (www.MIRA.org), an off-the-grid observatory in our back yard up on Chews Ridge. Many of us have heard of the Jamesburg Earth Station (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamesburg_Earth_Station) built to support the Apollo 11 moon landing.

So now I'm writing to generate more interest and tell everyone about the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) (<https://www.darksky.org>); the IDA serves as a clearing house to promote dark skies and recognize and preserve places worldwide where the glorious night sky is in full view. The website spells out several different types of designations, criteria for application, and how to become a member.

Won't the sky just be there as always? Why bother joining the IDA, one might ask? Two big reasons: with IDA's recognition

Carmel Valley residents will have more ability to preserve our night skies and develop regional interest about them; in addition, we join a global community to promote preservation of the night skies. I've started conversations with leadership of the Santa Cruz Chapter, who are currently busy working with Pinnacles National Park in their recognition process. It may be possible for Carmel Valley's interested parties to join forces with Regional Parks, Santa Lucia Preserve, Ventana Wilderness Alliance, and maybe Big Sur Land Trust and Big Sur and seek to apply as a combined Community, Park, Reserve, and Sanctuary designation of IDA for not just all of Carmel Valley from Highway 1 to Arroyo Seco, but for most of the Santa Lucia Range as well.

I've set up an email address to join in on our local effort. If you are interested, please send an email to: carmelvalleydarkskygroup@gmail.com

If you have read this far, you clearly may be interested. Thank you. Send an email, and then early in 2022 I will organize a Zoom conference for further exploration.