



From the President

JEFFREY WRIGHT

THERE IS nothing like family, friends, and colleagues coming together and meeting in person. On May 19th, the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce had a nice mixer at the Berkeley Country Club. I love that venue!

Let me start by giving “a tip of the hat” to our Chamber Manager Georgina Edwards for working diligently to put the event together. The staff at the country club was great as well. Georgina worked closely with Zheena in events planning and she also had some interaction with the General Manager, Ryan Wilson, and both he and Zheena were very helpful and accommodating.

I want to give special recognition to our event day bartender, Kimberly Louie, who serves as the Berkeley Country Club Restaurant Manager, and who we were fortunate enough to have as our bartender. She has all the characteristics of a top-notch bartender. A skilled mixologist, efficient, personable, and warm.

The El Cerrito community is fortunate to have such a wonderful venue with professional staff members who make it happen for their guests.

■ See *From the President*, page 7

Retired & Relaxed



Far from El Cerrito, here are Michael & Carol Pigni at Amber Cove in the Dominican Republic with the *Norwegian Breakaway* floating in the blue Caribbean sea. After serving our city for 27 years in the fire department, finishing off his career as chief, Mike is living a no stress life just like Jimmy Buffett.

Nominate NOW for ‘Best of El Cerrito’

BY ROBERT ROGERS

YOU CAN NOW nominate your favorite local businesses to be recognized in the 2022 “Best of El Cerrito” campaign, a multi-partner effort led by the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce that aims to highlight the city’s world-class, diverse business community.



elcerritochamber.org/best-of-ec

Categories are as eclectic as one would expect in El Cerrito, including designations like *Best Mexican food*, *Best spa*, and *Best healthy grocery*.

“It’s amazing how many great businesses are in El Cerrito,” said Chamber board member Scott Harris. “It was a challenge to create all the categories and best capture all the incredible services and resources that are here. This campaign is about celebrating what’s here and raising awareness near and far so that our businesses can not only survive, but thrive.”

Ensuring that local businesses prosper is key to overall quality of life in any city. A vibrant business community helps strengthen the tax base, provides services to residents, enhances community culture, and supports local real estate values.

But to have strong local businesses, residents must be intentional about directing their spending locally. According to studies by Civic Economics, dollars spent in independent local businesses return more than three times more to the local economy than dollars spent in chain stores. The disparity is even greater in comparing local businesses to online retailers.

Local businesses overcame daunting challenges during the pandemic, as people stayed home and spending on delivery services based outside the city increased. Faced with the pandemic, inflation, and online shopping, the best way to support your community is to patronize local businesses.

An award ceremony for winning businesses is slated for August, after open voting in July.

Winning businesses will enjoy extensive Chamber benefits including both physical and digital logos, certificates, marketing packages, municipal recognition, privileges at a banquet award ceremony, features in the *Byline* newsletter, and more!

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Past Prez Palaver

JOHN C. STASHIK



John C. Stashik

GABE QUINTO, El Cerrito Mayor, earns *Byline* recognition this month for a generous donation of \$1000 from he, and his partner Glen Nethercut, to the City's July 4th Festival. A resident of El Cerrito most of his life, Gabe became a council member in December 2014 and was elected to a second term four years later, serving as mayor in 2018 and again this year.

He and his colleagues on the council work long and hard for the City. For their efforts they are paid \$441 a month. It should be obvious they take the job to serve the community. Thank you all.

□

Big news! Indoor dining is now possible at **Fatapple's** restaurant for the first time since the start of the pandemic. A limited number of inside tables are available, no counter service, and you can now enjoy those pumpkin pancakes on a real plate instead of in a cardboard box. A slow return to normal.

□

Not so fast. A month ago I stated that May 1st would be the opening date for **Super Slice Pizza** at 10180 San Pablo. Well, it didn't happen. The owner, Omar, would be serving slices right now if it were not for lengthy delays by his suppliers. POS systems, and other needs for the new business, are caught up in the new supply chain mess. To be clear, this has nothing to do with permitting; that's totally under control. So just be patient.

□

Sil Addiego Officially Recognized



Robert Rogers

Sil Addiego, Realtor and long time Chamber member, accepts a certificate of appreciation from Supervisor John Gioia on behalf of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors at a special dinner held May 19th. Sheila Addiego is at left.

Safer. Caltrans is now installing new **Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (PHB)** at the San Pablo and Eureka/Columbia intersection. This is a major safety improvement. Want to see how PHBs work? Go by San Pablo and Dartmouth in Albany for a look.

□

Avenue construction. The road work on the southbound side of San Pablo Avenue is for fiber optic cable installation.

□

Mayfair update. What's taking so long? Word from Community Development Director Melanie Mintz is that the wait is on **EBMUD** for water hook up.

□

Cerrito musicals. Following two performances of "Anything Goes" in April, "Kinky Boots" will show at **Rialto Cinemas Cerrito** on August 2nd. Then on September 6th, "42nd Street." Both are from London's West End. Tickets: rialtocinemas.com.

□

Talk to Paul. As usual, Councilmember Paul Fadelli will stake out a table at the **Prepared Food Annex** on Thursday, June 2nd, and will be available to chat with constituents. He takes the extra step to communicate and I think that's a good thing. Other councilmembers ought to give it a try. If you have something on your mind, stop by and visit.

□

City budget. The 2022-23 fiscal year budget must be adopted by the end of this month. The document will be presented to the City Council on June 7th. The Financial Advisory Board reviews numbers on June 16th and the Council will hear the budget on June 21st. Keep informed at el-cerrito.org.

Top management earns the credit for the remarkable turnaround of the City's financial status. Layoffs, pay cuts, and furloughs, were necessary. Now it's time to restore COLAs and increase staff because you can't provide adequate service to "customers" without sufficient people to do the job. Everyone at the City does essential work and need to be compensated properly.

Previous city councils loved to spend money. The current batch seems to have learned a hard lesson.

□

Cops. The PD is in trouble as officers are leaving faster than they can be replaced. Morale stinks. That's my take. There can be as few as two officers on patrol at a given time, so obviously, response time slows; bad for public safety. A little respect for cops would improve morale.

Elect a DA that will actually prosecute criminals! Locking up offenders means they'll not offend while behind bars. Cops risk their lives catching bad guys only to have them back on the street again. That kills morale. **Vote smart.**

July 4th Fun Has Returned!

City of El Cerrito/worldOne July 4th Festival

11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Cerrito Vista Park

*These Generous Sponsors
helped make it happen*

Thank You All for being
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Nation's Giant Hamburgers Proudly

BY ROBERT ROGERS

DALE AND DANIELLE POWER have always been passionate about quality food. As President and CEO, Dale, and his wife Danielle, knew that quality fueled Nation's Giant Hamburgers' success in the hyper-competitive California fast-food market.

This time was no different. The Powers resolved that Nation's customers needed the healthiest seafood option.



Dale Power, Chairman of the Board

"It was Danielle's requirement, wild Alaskan Salmon," Power says, chuckling at the memory.

So they did what effective leaders do—they took action.

"We flew right in to Alaska, saw the huge metal plant, the fishing craft, the whole process," Power

says. "It was a strictly business trip, and it worked. We still have wild Alaskan salmon on our menus today."

In the decades since Dale and Danielle snared their wild salmon supply, Nation's Giant Hamburgers has burnished its mantle as a Bay Area institution. Today, the iconic business boasts 29 restaurants, flung from Sacramento to the north, Stockton to the east, south to Fremont and west to Daly City. The loyal customer base stretches even farther.

But no matter how far Nation's goes, El Cerrito is home.

The idea tickles Power when he reflects. He's seated at the head of a cherry conference table, perched on the third floor of the steel-framed Nation's Headquarters building in El Cerrito. He got his start in the business as a janitor in a San Pablo burger stand more than 60 years ago, but he seems as sharp and energetic as ever.

Power's cherubic face lights up when he shares one of his favorite facts. "I've never lived more than eight miles from where I was raised," Power says. "El Cerrito is our business' hometown."

The El Cerrito headquarters he built in 1985 teems with about 20 employees, some of whom have worked alongside Power so long they practically complete his sentences. El Cerrito is also home to Nation's high-volume bakery ("seven days a week we deliver fresh pies to all our stores," he says), its trucking and construction equipment garage, and the beloved restaurant at 6060 Central Avenue.

Power has settled into his role as Chairman of the Board while turning the CEO reins to his son Grant, who



San Pablo store 1963

Nation's Giant Hamburgers

is doing a great job continuing to grow Nation's.

Now he has more time to tell the story. Doffing his suit jacket in favor of a crisp Oxford and striped tie, the proud Cal alum breezes through a slideshow of Nation's history.

He was 15 years old when he asked Russ Harvey for a job. Harvey (who's in his 90s and "still eats Giant burgers," Power says) started the business in 1952, hanging a shingle on a little stand then called "Harvey's Giant Hamburgers" in San Pablo. Pictures from the time show a sparse, low-slung neighborhood that bears little resemblance to the bustling corridor of today. That burger stand, now a Nation's, has grown too, into a spacious building that dwarfs the memory of the little stand that preceded it. The name "Nation's" wouldn't come until 1970, when Dale proposed the idea

to an agreeing Harvey.

But it was in 1961 that Harvey hired Power as a janitor. The precocious teen worked and learned under the founder for nearly a decade, through college, and while still in grad school, opening his own burger joint in Oakland in Jack London Square, where "Nation's Giant Hamburgers" was first used.



Nation's Giant Hamburgers

Calls El Cerrito Home



Nation's in El Cerrito at Central and San Pablo Avenues



The normally sunny Power turns solemn when discussing the origins of his success.

His life and career changed the day after Christmas, 1964. Power's 24 year-old brother, Charles, two friends and the father of one friend went on a duck hunting trip north of Sacramento. They split into pairs, with Power's brother in a little boat with his friend Ray, who didn't know how to swim. Rough conditions flipped their boat, spilling both into the icy water.

"My brother grabbed Ray and made a life jacket for him out of decoys," Power said. "My brother could have easily swam to shore, but he wasn't about to leave Ray."

Rescue teams found Ray, dead from hypothermia, floating in a makeshift life jacket the next day.

It took eight weeks to recover the body of Power's brother. He'd lost his life trying to save one.

"It was a heroic death," Power says, softly. "And it changed the course of my life. I really focused on my academics after that."

While the company has grown, the recipe that made it a Bay Area staple hasn't changed. While Power is an acclaimed innovator, he's careful to give Harvey credit for the "original design" of the famed burger.

"He designed our burgers to have four food groups," Power says with an impish grin. "There was the hamburger, bread, and cheese, and Harvey added the vegetables, which wasn't common back then."

Millions of customers over the years have attested to Harvey's design. Meanwhile, Power is a civic beacon, a local success story who maintains his roots and gives back.

"Dale is a great local business leader who has grown Nation's into a successful Bay Area favorite," said County Supervisor John Gioia, a longtime friend. "He has con-

tributed back to our community in many ways and his civic contributions have improved our lives."

Power notes that despite a challenging economy and the pandemic, Nation's will soon add two locations to its roster of 29 restaurants and grow its workforce of nearly 500.

Nation's may have a rich history, but it's the future that energizes Power.

"We are a young company led by dynamic, young managers now," Power says.

Vigor and ingenuity are needed, Power concedes. First the pandemic and now rampant inflation are a formidable one-two punch to his already thin margins.

"We are absorbing all the fuel and cost increases we can to limit raising our prices, but our margins aren't where they should be," Power says.

At the same time, as a local resident, Power is concerned about the lack of housing supply and the consequent housing affordability crisis.

"The cost of living for blue collar people in the area today is just backbreaking," he says.

But Power remains committed to El Cerrito and the region, and is enthusiastic about the future.

Asked to explain the secrets to his success, Power is brief and direct.

"Good ethics, honesty, always looking for win-win arrangements with partners, and putting yourself in the shoes of others, whether it be customers, partners, competitors, or anyone else," Power says.

Power pauses to mull a thought. He's a trusting man, but he verifies too.

"Good training programs and secret shoppers to maintain quality across all stores."

"And one more thing," he says, "wild caught Alaskan salmon."



To learn more about Nation's Giant Hamburgers, see full menus, and find locations, go to nationsrestaurants.com

'Leafy Seahorse' Has a New Home in the El Cerrito Public Library

BY EILEEN LIBBY

THE EL CERRITO Art Association presented library manager Heidi Goldstein with Sylvia Mori's mosaic "Leafy Seahorse" in appreciation for that venue over many years of group and individual exhibits. Originally part of our show matching "Dive Deep," the library's summer reading program theme, it was especially admired by staff and public.

Unanimously approved as a donation to the library by ECAA's board of directors, it was installed over the fireplace on Friday, May 6th, with a special plaque honoring the relationship between our organizations. We are all incredibly pleased to have this artwork now on display after such a long pandemic delay.

Inspired by a mosaic artist in Barcelona, Sylvia Mori has been making her mosaics since 2005. Returning from travels to Italy, France, Spain and Chile over the years, she often brought specialty tiles collected on her excursions to use in future compositions, carefully within the weight limits!

Her prize-winning mosaic "Centennial" was purchased by the City during our centennial celebration and is now on display at El Cerrito City Hall. An exhibit of other pieces is on display in the lobby of El Cerrito Community Center and at Juku, the co-working space at 7019 Stockton Ave., where she will be making a presentation at 6 p.m. on Thursday, June 16th.

ECAA appreciates the many years of opportunity to display artwork at the library and we miss the space now that staff and storage needs must prevail.



Eileen Libby, library manager Heidi Goldstein, and Sylvia Mori

Library staff hopes for creative exhibit solutions to match this summer's theme of "Read Beyond the Beaten Path!"

El Cerrito Art Association is a City sponsored organization created by El Cerrito resident Barbara Benzinger.



Art Association Program Monday, June 13th · 7-9 p.m.

Demonstration of hand built pieces
by ceramic artist Ellen Schachtshale at the
Arlington Park Clubhouse
1120 Arlington Blvd., El Cerrito.

Free and open to the public
elcerritoart.org

She worked to create a City sponsorship in support of local visual artists developing their talents to also have a place to show their work. Each year (except for 2020) we have produced an exhibit during the first weekend in October, open to the public at no charge.

This year we celebrate our 45th Annual Art Show, a non-juried weekend intensive with "Connections" as our special category in addition to the other twelve. Show dates are October 1-2, from 11 until 4 at the El Cerrito Community Center, with the opening reception on Friday, September 30th, 7-9 p.m. Visit us at the worldOne Festival where we will have *Call for Artists'* information. See elcerritoart.org.



An Rialto Cinemas Cerrito employee updates the most visible sign in El Cerrito. Just so you know, it is NOT Vanna White.

Byline Pick Up Locations

THIS NEWSLETTER is mailed monthly to Chamber of Commerce members and others. A PDF edition is posted and available on the Chamber website: elcerritochamber.org/byline.

Other distribution points are:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| El Cerrito City Hall | Doherty's Truck Rental |
| Elevation 66 Brewing Co. | El Cerrito Public Library |
| The Glenn Custom Framing | El Cerrito Community Center office |
| Mr. Pickle's Sandwich Shop | The Farmers Market at El Cerrito Plaza |

FROM THE PRESIDENT

■ Continued from page 1

The purpose of the mixer was two-fold. We wanted to have a very nice springtime event and also recognize Sil Addiego for his forty years of service as a Chamber board member. Sil recently retired from the board, and we all felt that we wanted to let him know how much we appreciated his service to the board as well as his contributions to the greater El Cerrito community.

We know how busy our elected officials are, and it was good to see our county Supervisor John Gioia not only in attendance, but also there to present Sil with a lovely, framed resolution. El Cerrito Mayor Gabe Quinto had a prior engagement, however, he too sent a nice certificate of recognition that former mayor and current city councilmember Paul Fadelli graciously presented to Sil on Mayor Quinto's behalf.

After the presentations were made, Ron Codron, who owned and operated Abbey Carpet & Floor for 45 years, before selling the business in 2019, asked if he could have a few words. His remarks and tribute to Sil were very heart warming. One longtime businessperson bestowing heartfelt accolades on another is just touching.

Sil Addiego is a very gracious and elegant man. He does not have to say a word. His attire and neatly coiffed mane of silver hair speaks volumes. However, when he does speak, he has something meaningful to say. Having traveled from Italy aboard the *SS Andrea Doria* in 1955 to start a new life here in the United States, and becoming a successful family-oriented person, businessperson and community advocate is a testament to who he is. Willing to give, share and participate as he did for 40 years on the Chamber board. Being

involved in the community takes time. I was really pleased that Sil's wife, Sheila, was present to witness the high-level of appreciation that we have for Sil. The two of them are just a classy, warm, and elegant couple. At the event, my wife Tyra was talking to Sheila Addiego and if I got the story correct from my wife, Sil and Sheila had a first date, or very early date, at this same country club where he was being recognized. With that tidbit of information, the country club was a fitting location for the event.

Thank you to all who were able to attend, and again, much thanks to Sil Addiego for his years of service and to his lovely wife Sheila for being so generous in sharing Sil with the greater community.

\$2,500 Grants

THE CALIFORNIA Office of the Small Business Advocate has awarded funding for the Micro-business COVID-19 Relief Grant Program to provide grants to micro-businesses including those in Contra Costa County.

Applications are being accepted through August 12th. To learn the requirements to receive these grants, check out microbusinessgrant.org on the web.

El Cerrito's Community Development Department is always a resource for information. Contact: community@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us

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In-Person Lunches Are Back!

Wednesday, June 22
11:30-1:00

\$25 members/\$27 non-members



11720 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito

Guest Speaker: Kevin O'Neal
Owner of Well Grounded Tea & Coffee Bar
"The Power of Visioning for Small Businesses"

RSVP: info@elcerritochamber.org by June 17

Grand Re-Opening of US Bank



US Bank, which has its El Cerrito office inside the Safeway store, has been remodeled. The branch held a ribbon cutting on Wednesday, May 25th, before a large crowd of Chamber and bank personnel. Branch manager Carlos Pennington is shown in the center wielding El Cerrito's famous Big Scissors.

John C. Stashik

Read CommDev News

Community Development e-Newsletter
el-cerrito.org/CommDev

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