



## From the President

MATT KHADIVIAN

MY DEAR readers, I hope you are taking time this summer to rejuvenate and energize for the remainder of 2023. In this edition, I am taking a lighthearted look at what our popular humanoid robot has been up to. In an unexpected twist, the tech world's beloved overlord, Mark Zuckerberg, has been making waves recently for more than just his social media endeavors. The "mastermind" behind Facebook, now known as Meta, has taken up a surprising hobby that's leaving both investors and his opponents on the mat: Jiu-Jitsu.

As news of Zuckerberg's grappling escapades spread, an uncanny correlation between his jiu-jitsu workouts and the rise in Meta stock prices has surfaced. The more Mark took down opponents on the mat, the higher the stocks climbed. Coincidence? I highly doubt it. Personally, I think this is the work of his marketing and communications team, scrambling together some really fantastic and amusing optics for the once socially inept Silicon Valley nerd.

Maybe we all, as business owners or advocates, can take a page from Zuck's book: Presenting yourself in a positive light, and appearing strong and reliable as a person, creates confidence in your brand.

Also, keep an eye out for Zuck's upcoming "Cage Match" with Elon Musk. Should be hysterical.

As always, thank you for giving me your most valuable commodity, your time.

## A Glorious El Cerrito Fourth



10,000+ friends and neighbors celebrated Independence Day at Cerrito Vista Park. This was the 25th year of the worldOne/City of El Cerrito event. See who made it happen on page 3.

## ☒ On Your Mark, Get Set, VOTE!



BY ROBERT ROGERS

OUR El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce's "Best of El Cerrito" Campaign is off to a blistering start, with hundreds of nominations piling up as residents eagerly highlight their favorite local businesses. Now it is time to vote for your El Cerrito favorites!

Visit [elcerritchamber.org/best-of-ec](http://elcerritchamber.org/best-of-ec) to make your voice heard today. Voting opens this month. Winners will be announced in September.

Winning businesses are bolstered with marketing perks, buoyed with positive word of mouth, minted with far-reaching prestige, and showered with award-winning swag.

Voting is super easy and fun! Simply visit [elcerritchamber.org](http://elcerritchamber.org) and follow the prompts. Or see page 6 and scan the QR code.

Last year's inaugural campaign was a sensation. The effort tapped the tremendous energy of residents and patrons, topping out with 22,000 votes and 125 local businesses being crowned "Best of El Cerrito" winners in their categories.

We came together as a community in a huge way. The #shoplocal ethos that your Chamber champions nourishes our local businesses, builds our tax base, and lifts all the resources and amenities that make El Cerrito a wonderful community.

Due to robust growth in participating and generous sponsors, this year's award ceremony will be held in the beautiful showroom of El Cerrito Honda at 11755 San Pablo Ave. The event is set for October. Stay tuned for the date.

Thanks especially to superstar local sponsors who care deeply for our El Cerrito community: El Cerrito Honda, Prospect Sierra, Negar Souza & Feri Niroomand/Red Oak Realty, AC Transit, Little Hill Real Estate, Shrem Law, and Off the Block S.T.E.M.

### ★ NEW MEMBERS ★

#### The Practice Space

1600 Navellier Street  
El Cerrito 94530  
510-708-0535  
[practice-space.org](http://practice-space.org)

#### Fuse Fitness

377 Colusa Avenue  
Kensington 94707  
510-647-8831  
[thefusefitnessstudio.com](http://thefusefitnessstudio.com)



## Past Prez Palaver

JOHN C. STASHIK

**SO CLASSY!** By now, every address in El Cerrito should have their beautiful, new garbage and recycling containers. That's almost 12,000 homes and businesses where East Bay Sanitary Co., Inc. had to make a swap with garbage carts changing to black and recycling carts becoming blue. Thank our state legislature for enacting the new law mandating these color changes; obviously, the important piece of legislation in years. **Your tax dollars at work.** Maybe they'll deal with the state's homeless crisis some day now that trash cans have vivid, new Pantone colors.

□



John C. Stashik

**Smile.** Now being installed in strategic locations around the city are 40 cameras that will record license plates of vehicles passing them. Addressing the city council in March, Police Chief **Paul Keith** stated that "El Cerrito has the highest property crime rate in the county." These cameras are one tool that could aid in apprehension of criminals that prey on residents *and businesses*. As word gets out maybe the cameras will influence the bad guys to stay out of El Cerrito.

□

**Al fresco.** Our ever so popular Banter Wine Bar now has some tables and chairs placed on the sidewalk (San Pablo Ave. just south of Stockton). I think this would be a great place for a certain city council member to hold a **public meet and greet**, the previous session being exactly two years ago at the Little Hill bar. *Hint, hint...*

□



John C. Stashik

**One more step** in the process. The organic vegan grocery now building at Moeser and San Pablo has a new sign.

□

**New businesses!** At the Plaza, Dave's Hot Chicken is moving quickly with their build out at the former Rubio's site. Give them a little more time.

Meanwhile, no construction action seen yet at the new **Ike's Love & Sandwiches** (former Supercuts space). But when it happens, the legions of loyal Ike's followers will be counting down days, minutes, and seconds, until the store actually opens.

**Freddie's Shop** will hold a grand opening bash on Saturday, August 19th, at 7523-A Fairmount, near Fatapple's. More on this elsewhere on these pages.

□



**Potrero & San Pablo** will get a new look some day. A building permit application has been submitted for a mixed use project that includes a brewery and restaurant. First sign of progress: construction fencing already wraps around the property.

□

**The OSH lot.** Construction trailers are on site and contractors have been seen inspecting the property in preparation of rebuilding the abandoned hardware store into a **self storage facility**. A second story will be added within the existing structure. That building permit was approved a month ago. An additional application is pending for construction of 310 residential units on the remainder of that huge former OSH site.

□



John C. Stashik

**New guru in town.** Ngawang Tsering, above, has opened his El Cerrito version of **Guru Curry House** at 10350 San Pablo Ave. He, and partner Nima Bhutia, also own another in Oakland. Here's a peek inside.



John C. Stashik

**Save 15% this month** when dining in at the new Guru Curry House. Hours: 11 to 3 for lunch; 5 to 9 for dinner; closed Wednesday. Call 510-529-4262. [gurucurryhouse.com](http://gurucurryhouse.com)

□

**Barbers.** In July the *Byline* ran a story about Phil Playle. *The Forge*, a publication of the El Cerrito Historical Society, has a great story in the current issue by Jon Bashor about local barber shops. [elcerritohistoricalsociety.org](http://elcerritohistoricalsociety.org).

□

**Special tour.** The El Cerrito Historical Society presents a tour of the **Golden Gate Mausoleum** located in Sunset View Cemetery on Friday, August 18th, at 3:30 p.m. Dave Weinstein has the details; [davidswinstein@yahoo.com](mailto:davidswinstein@yahoo.com).

□

■ See Past Prez Palaver, page 3



# THANK YOU TO ALL SPONSORS!



This year's worldOne/City of El Cerrito Fourth of July Festival was a huge success. Appreciation goes to all the Sponsors, as without them, there would be no festival. In addition, thanks are conveyed here to roustabout/emcee/DJ Cory Mason; the incredible staff at El Cerrito Recreation, and the amazing, always "can-do" team at EC Public Works.

## Stars & Stripes Level \$2500

- ★ AC Transit
- Chevron
- ★ EBMUD
- ★ East Bay Sanitary Co., Inc.
- ★ JunkCat
- Kaiser Permanente
- PG&E
- ★ Premier Graphics
- Stege Sanitary District
- ★ TiresDirect

## Blue Level \$1000

- ★ Doherty's Truck Rental
- El Cerrito Democratic Club
- Jimmy Stuart Construction
- MCE
- ★ Mechanics Bank
- ★ Olivero Plumbing Co., Inc.
- ★ Rialto Cinemas Cerrito

## Red Level \$500

- ★ BART
- Crestmont School
- ★ BJ Thorsnes
- Meyers Nave
- ★ Nation's Foodservice, Inc.
- ★ Pastime Ace Hardware
- Paul & Michelle Fadelli
- West County Forum

## White Level \$300

- Barbara & Al Miller
- El Cerrito Trail Trekkers
- Gary & Jean Pokorny
- Neil Tsutsui & Jordan Thompson
- Plaza Auto Service
- Retired Mayors Jane & Rich Bartke
- St. John Seniors

## Arts & Culture Commission \$10,000

City Art in Public Places Funds

★ Denotes Chamber of Commerce member

## PAST PREZ PALAVER

■ Continued from page 2

**Paul Fadelli**, council member and *Byline* writer, meets the public at the Natural Grocery's Prepared Food Annex on first Mondays, 10 until noon. Appointments: [pfadelli@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:pfadelli@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us).

□

**Mac is back.** It was February 2022 when Blanca Zepeda and Juvenal Magaña opened Mi Casa Grill at the corner of Macdonald and San Pablo in Richmond. You read about it here. Transforming a dilapidated building into a beautifully designed Mexican restaurant was a major feat in itself. Creating menus, hiring staff, and running a successful business in the food industry is always a challenge. But the couple did it. The place has been a success from day one. Read our review on page 5.

Who could have possibly imagined that only a year and a half later, the same couple would embark on reopening a restaurant in the long shuttered Hotel Mac in Point Richmond? Again, they did it. After several months of renovation, Biancoverde opened to the public on Independence Day.

The cuisine is Italian and under the direction of Executive Chef Fabio Bucio. The Hotel Mac is once again



Blanca Zepeda and Juvenal Magaña

a go-to place for a great meal and cocktails.

*Is there an El Cerrito connection to this Richmond business news? In fact, there is.*

This dynamic new power couple of the local restaurant scene leased two of the ground floor commercial spaces at Mayfair Station. That's the new apartment building at Cutting and San Pablo in El Cerrito.

In the near future, Blanca and Juvenal will be building out their Mi Casa food

court and lounge across the street from the Del Norte BART station.

(Their neighbor will be a grocery and convenience store called Mayfair Market, the name of the business that was there nearly a half century ago.)

Here's a salute to Blanca and Juvenal for opening two superb area restaurants. Truly amazing. Now we can look forward to the Mayfair location.



Biancoverde's official ribbon cutting with Point Richmond Business Association and Richmond Chamber of Commerce was held on July 13th.

Appreciation too, for being *Byline* readers. We love our subscribers.

By the way, Biancoverde is open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day except Wednesday. Phone 510-374-6511. Or [biancoverderestaurant.com](http://biancoverderestaurant.com).

## Passion: the Key Ingredient at El Cerrito's Only Brewpub

BY ROBERT ROGERS

THERE'S A LOT that helps Elevation 66 Brewing Company stand apart. For one, it's the only brewpub in El Cerrito. Then there's the famous and inimitable East Bay IPA, the flagship beer. There's the four gleaming tanks of fermenting goodness that tower from behind the old growth redwood bar. The custom walnut dining tables promise superb repose. The locally produced art adorning the walls completes the ambiance.

But this special brewpub and restaurant is lifted by a more intangible force. The force is what the husband and wife co-ownership team brings to the space: *Passion, faith, love, and persistence.*

"It all started with the passion, and it was never based strictly on money," said Esther Goodstal, her soft voice wending its way through the merry Friday afternoon din of customer chatter. "Passion for good food, for supporting our local community, and for craft beer."

Husband David Goodstal nodded in support, his long white van dyke bobbing just above the rich walnut dining table.

### Celebrating 12 Years



At 11:30 a.m. on September 1, 2011, co-owner Brian Kelly poured the first pint as Elevation 66 officially opened. The photo appeared in this column.

El Cerrito's one and only brewpub is open seven days a week serving house brewed craft beers and fresh, local food. Happy hours are on weekdays, 3-5 p.m., offering a pint of house brewed beer for \$6.50 or a glass of wine for \$10 with purchase of a selected small plate. There is a large private event space available on the second floor.

[elevation66.com](http://elevation66.com)

whisked on the energy of a dream. David Goodstal and Kelly worked together at the since-closed Pyramid Brewing Co. in Berkeley. On an otherwise unremarkable night after work, they vowed to take the plunge into business ownership.

And they've never looked back. Despite near-ruinous safety sanctions during the pandemic and an explosion of rival breweries in the greater East Bay, Elevation 66 has endured — El Cerrito's proud, lone, and famous brewery.

The success is owed to many factors, including six hand-crafted brews produced onsite. The kitchen is no less inventive and committed to quality, producing exquisite cuisine from locally sourced ingredients whipped into



David and Esther Goodstal

dishes made from scratch. The potato chips and pickles they produce on site are legendary for their quality. The atmosphere is also a big part of success. Esther described it as a quality inspired by the 1980s megahit sitcom *Cheers*, her favorite.

"Many of our customers have the feeling that when you come in, everybody knows your name," she said.

The Elevation 66 burger made with Wagyu beef is a favorite, and other popular items include the Reuben and Cubano sandwiches.

The brewpub also doubles as a venue for local artists to display their work. The art pairs nicely with impressive accoutrements. There's recycled brick from an historic Victorian in Oakland, which bolsters the stately redwood bar; the ornate hanging pendant lights made of handblown glass produced in Germany suspend gracefully overhead.

David Goodstal has impeccable craft beer chops, having graduated from the acclaimed master brewer program at UC Davis in 2003. On a typical day, he wears his jet black "Head Brewer" shirt while on duty, and isn't above jumping in to help his wait staff service customers.

It's the attention to detail and the passion for quality local products that makes Elevation 66 special.

There's no microwave oven at this business. *Scratch made* is the standard at Elevation 66. The Goodstals live their business philosophy. Esther sums up the vision of their business as "authentic, artisan, local."

When they aren't putting all they have into their brewpub, Esther and David like to unwind with their beloved Beagles, Molly 2.0 and Ellie.

"We've been through a lot, and we are still passionate," David said, standing in front of a bar that grew livelier by the minute. "We hope everyone who loves excellent local foods and beers and art will come and visit."

**ELEVATION 66**  
Brewing Company

10082 San Pablo Ave. (on the Theater Block) in El Cerrito  
Phone: 510-525-4800



# MI CASA GRILL



STORY & PHOTOS BY CATALINA HU

**M**I CASA GRILL opened its doors in March 2022 just when we were gradually returning to pre-pandemic normalcy. I vividly remember the excitement of entering Mi Casa Grill for the first time shortly after its grand opening. The friendly staff behind the counter of the bright open kitchen greeted me with genuine smiles. The super shiny live edge dining tables immediately caught my eyes, and the surrealist



mural became the focal point until I looked at the menu.

They have every-

thing! Whether you are meatatarian, pescatarian, vegetarian, or vegan, the extensive menu has something for you. I had dinner

for my first visit, but I knew I had to return for breakfast that weekend.

My favorite appetizer is fried avocado tacos. Co-owner Blanca Zepeda was my server that day, and she described what the fried avocado tacos were. The avocado was prepared in three ways: creamed, fried, and natural, in each taco. It is then served with pickled vegetables on handmade tortillas. That sounded fantastic, and they turned out to be much more than I expected. The lightly fried avocado, pickled red onions and other veggies atop avocado cream inside of a fluffy handmade tortilla is not only beautiful to look at but also the perfect combination of flavors and textures. I was hooked after the first bite. I couldn't wait to go back for more.



Chile Relleno Plato with whole black beans is my favorite entrée. Unlike a regular chile relleno at other restaurants, Mi Casa's chile relleno is filled not only with cheese but also



corn, mushrooms, plantains, and epazote. It's topped with a delicious rich tomato sauce and served with warm fluffy handmade tortillas. (Did I mention that I love their fluffy handmade tortillas?) I also appreciate how the entrées are plated beautifully with different colors of vegetables, sauces, and garnishes.



For breakfast, you can get traditional American breakfast items such as waffles or pancakes. However, when you are at Mi Casa Grill, why not try Mexican breakfast such as chilaquiles, breakfast enchiladas, or traditional Mexican omelet with a glass of fresh carrot juice or cucumber spinach agua fresca?

In addition to a selection of agua frescas, signature cocktails, import beers and local wines are also available from its full bar. Coffee drinkers have the options of whole milk or plant-based alternatives such as almond, oat, or soy milk. No matter what you like to drink, Mi Casa has it.

## MI CASA GRILL

12056 San Pablo Ave. (on the corner of Macdonald) • Richmond  
Phone 510-374-6033  
[micasagrillrestaurant.com](http://micasagrillrestaurant.com)  
Closed Mondays





Artist Steve Zwetsch stevezwetsch@gmail.com  
IG @CigarBoxKitchen

Photo by Brian McGilloway



## Steve Zwetsch Local Artist Guitar Series

CigarBoxKitchen.com

Playable instruments made from repurposed, upcycled, and found objects in the City Hall Gallery Space, 2nd floor

Artist's Reception  
Friday, August 25th,  
6 to 7:30 p.m.



# VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITES!



[elcerritchamber.org/best-of-ec](http://elcerritchamber.org/best-of-ec)



*El Cerrito Art Association  
wants YOU and your Artwork!*

## Call for Artists!

Early Bird Entries: August 15th  
Final Deadline: September 15th

Special Category Theme:  
"ABUNDANCE"

Cash Prizes  
1st \$100 2nd \$50 3rd \$25  
in categories with 12 or more entries  
Plus Special & Merchant Awards

Opening Artists' Reception  
October 6th • 7-9 p.m.

Weekend Show Hours  
Includes Unframed Art Bin Sales  
Saturday, October 7th • 11 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Sunday, October 8th • 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

**El Cerrito Art Association**  
<https://elcerritoart.org/artshow-2/>



John C. Stashik

Retired maintenance superintendent Bill Driscoll and his shiny 1957 Buick Roadmaster, one of many car show entries at the 2023 worldOne/City of El Cerrito Fourth of July Festival. Bill worked for the City of El Cerrito for 24 years.



While the Chamber was pitching the "Best of El Cerrito" at the Fourth of July Festival, the REAL best of El Cerrito stopped by. That happens to be Tessa Rudnick, council member. Under the canopy is Kevin O'Neal, Chamber vice president.



## Sondheim on Sondheim

A Sensational Musical Tribute



Premiere Friday, August 25th

Friday-Saturday 7:30 p.m.

Sunday 2 p.m.

Through September 10th

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**AUGUST CHAMBER MIXER**

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**Wednesday, August 16th • 5:30-7:30 p.m.**

*Celebrate the 10th Anniversary  
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