



From the President

KEVIN O'NEAL

MARCH IS Irish American Heritage month, and having the name Kevin O'Neal, I must write about it!

St. Patrick's Day as it's celebrated here is different than in Ireland. We think of wearing green, getting pinched if we don't, shamrocks, leprechauns, red heads (like John Stashik!), pots of gold, rainbows, parades, drum and fife bands, kilts and bagpipes, Irish folk dancing, singing over beer...mmm...lots of beer, soda bread, Irish stew, potatoes, corned beef and cabbage! It's a day when Irish immigrants and their descendants make an effort to stay in touch with their roots.

One of my fondest memories is of a San Francisco St. Patrick's Day parade down Market Street, when our son Jack was about two and a half. Wearing his green plaid shirt and a sharp looking paddy cap, he stepped out of the crowd of onlookers and joined in the march

■ See From the President, page 7



Awards Night Viewing Party

A benefit for El Cerrito High School's Student Activity Fund

Sunday, March 10th at Rialto Cinemas Cerrito

Doors open 3 p.m.
Red Carpet 3:30 p.m.
Show starts at 4 p.m.

Tickets \$49

Include appetizers, beverage, costume contest, trivia, prizes, and lots of fun.

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Nit Pickin' Experts Arrive in El Cerrito

BY ROBERT ROGERS

KNIGI GLEE's journey to El Cerrito took her across the nation and the Bay Area, and her late father remains in her heart no matter where she goes.

George Glee Jr., a legendary community leader for whom a Brooklyn, New York, street is named, would counsel Knigi about avoiding the scourge of lice at school and in the community.



Knigi Glee

He never could have known that someday his little girl would become the queen of natural lice removal in the Bay Area.

"We never know where our dreams may take us," Knigi mused, flashing a bright smile while striding around her gleaming new El Cerrito headquarters at 11362 San Pablo Ave.

What started as a dream is now a thriving, three-location business that safely treats head lice infestation, which is particularly common in school children.

Glee celebrated her grand opening in El Cerrito earlier this year with a joyous ribbon-cutting event hosted by the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce with Mayor Tessa Rudnick.

Now she and her team are busily making connections in town and eradicating pesky lice on a daily basis.

"We are just so excited to be in El Cerrito," Glee said. "This community is special, welcoming, and has so much potential too."

New IRS 'Love Letter'

BY SMILEY NELSON

ON JANUARY 5, 2022, the National Taxpayer Advocate's office said the IRS had a backlog of 23.5 million tax returns that still needed processing. This pandemic-caused event was massive and unprecedented.



It prompted the IRS to stop mailing collection notices in February 2022.

However, with funding of \$60 billion, new hiring, and a new mandate, the IRS is making up for lost time. In the fall of 2023, business taxpayers began receiving automated collection notices. Beginning last month automated collection notices for older personal tax years began. This reinforces the IRS's current philosophy of "Return To Business As Usual." And in January 2024, a brand-new IRS love letter, the LT38, made its debut.

This new special reminder letter includes an updated account balance

■ See IRS Love Letter, page 6

Glee's journey to owner of NitPixies began as a little girl in Brooklyn and the Bronx, where she sat in on nonprofit and community meetings as a little girl. As a teen, she volunteered. Community service was a key part of her family's culture, as was hard work.

But while New York is a place where dreams come true, her mom always reminded her to think even bigger.

"My mom always said the world is so much more than just New York," she said.

After college and graduate school, Glee and her husband made the leap to Oakland to start a new life. That was eight years ago. To get to know her new community, Glee did what she's always done: She volunteered.

She set her standards high. "I went to (then Oakland) Mayor Libby Schaaf's office and said I wanted to be a volunteer to help our community," she said.

Glee soon launched the successful "Mobile Mayor" program that brought Schaaf to various communities for weekend events and deep engagement with constituents.

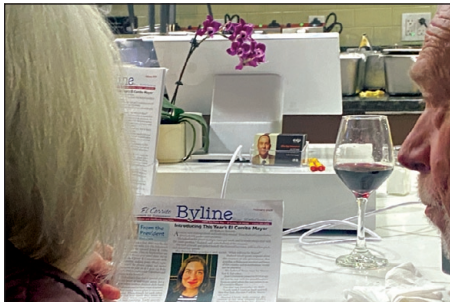
■ See Nit Pickin' Experts, page 6



Past Prez Palaver

JOHN C. STASHIK

BY EDICT from the president of this Chamber, Kevin O'Neal, this will be the final *Byline* issue mailed to readers who are *not* members of the organization. Non-members will now be expected to pay for a subscription, which as I understand it, will be five dollars a year.



John C. Stashik

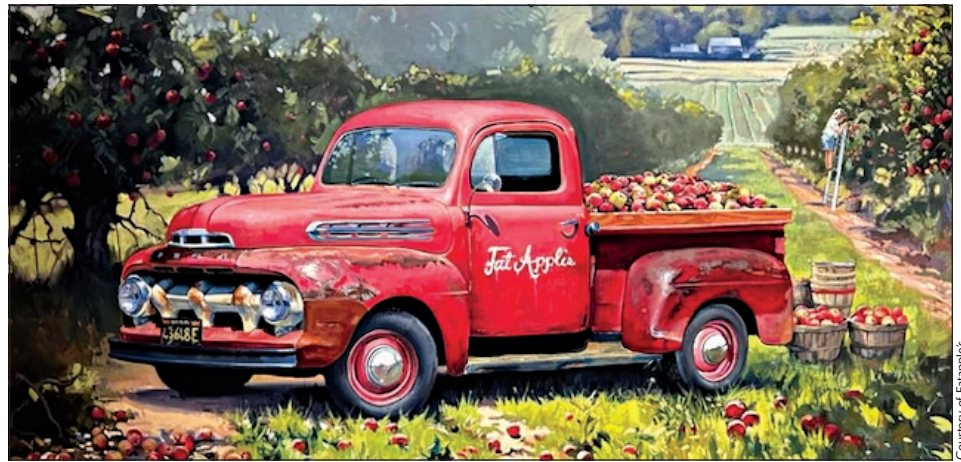
That is a major change for hundreds of people who have enjoyed receiving this newsletter by mail on the first of each month. This is issue #196 that I've produced. The *Byline* has evolved into a high quality publication and I receive a lot of very positive feedback from readers.

For the information of those that may be chopped from the subscription list, I will call out some names whose talent has contributed to the success of *Byline*. Former Chamber manager **Lisa Martinengo** starts the list followed by our city's own beloved journalist, the late **Chris Treadway**, one of my best hires.

A relatively recent addition to the staff is **Robert Rogers**, whose byline appears on many articles. An amazing writer, Robert turns stories around in mere hours. Another superb helper who both writes and handles back shop production duties is **Catalina Hu**. Then there is council member **Paul Fadelli**, who also is a talented journalist besides being a really nice guy.

City of El Cerrito staff are part of the team, as well. Community Development's **Melanie Mintz** and **Aissia Ashoori** are both an important assist to me and we exchange "intel" on a frequent basis. Assistant to the City Manager **Will Provost** is quick to reply to my email requests for info. Finally, although she avoids any spotlight, City

Fatapple's Gets a New, Redd Truck



Courtesy of Fatapple's

"Redd Delicious," oil on canvas, Santiago Michalek, 2024.

Redd Delicious depicts a 1951 Ford F-100 pickup truck in an apple orchard during harvest. A young girl in the background helps with the fruit picking. The truck is modeled directly from the iconic 1951 Ford used in the hit TV sitcom series "Sanford and Son" starring Redd Foxx. The Norman Lear production began in 1972, three years after Fatapple's served their first apple pie. The artist is from Highland, Utah. Look up santiagomichalek.com for more information. The painting is on display at the El Cerrito store.

Manager **Karen Pinkos** has been a very important *Byline* aide, always willing to proofread a story to check facts for total accuracy on City matters.

So contact the Chamber office to subscribe as a non-member or go to the website. I really do appreciate all the loyal readers of this publication.

City news. For those who follow such details, the **classification and compensation study** ordered last year will be released at city council on March 5th.

Cocktail time. **California Fish Grill** at El Cerrito Plaza will be offering adult beverages in the form of **cocktails** to enhance your dining experience. It's always 5 o'clock in El Cerrito.

For sale or lease. This 4850 sq. ft. building, at 10351 San Pablo Avenue (with a parking lot), will become available mid-year. It's on a prime midtown block in El Cerrito near the Natural Grocery Co. Contact Rod Codron at ronec@comcast.net.



John C. Stashik

Gaucha music. El Cerrito High School Jazz Bands with KMS Jazz Ensemble, will play at Yoshi's Oakland (near Jack London Square) on March 19th. Tickets: yoshis.com or 510-238-9200.

Hillside Festival. Mark calendars for May 4-5 for this popular annual event put on by El Cerrito Trail Trekkers and co-sponsored the City's Environmental Quality Committee. More about this event later, so watch for the colorful map and guide to be printed soon and available around town.

Pinole? A new Nordstrom Rack will soon open at Pinole Vista. El Cerrito could use a Rack, but maybe there's no place to put one. Frustrating, huh?



Georgina Edwards

The Turnabout Shop, located on the San Pablo Avenue theater block, recently welcomed two new student volunteers: **Iliana Go** and **Sage Dalla**.

■ See Past Prez Palaver, page 3

PAST PREZ PALAVER

■ Continued from page 2



2024 City Manager of the Year. So proclaims the California City Management Foundation (CCMF) in reference to our very own Karen Pinkos. Fact is, you've read her name on these pages for over five years (Karen began her CM job in December 2018), so CCMF could've simply asked the *Byline*. Unpretentious, hard working, Midwest friendly, she has been El Cerrito's best city manager ever. Congratulations Karen! You make us **#ElCerritoProud**.

□

Retail. Marshalls is still building their El Cerrito Plaza store and now there are "open soon" signs. Exact moving date is unknown to store staff at this time.

□

A "gem." That was the summary of a recent Google review about Dolly's wine bar featuring Italian bites and Cheese Wheel Pasta at 10172 San Pablo Avenue.



Salute! Mayor Tessa Rudnick, right, with Dolly Batathota, following an interview for Yelp which will appear on Instagram mid-month. The Yelp piece is highlighting businesses owned by women and Dolly is one notable El Cerrito example.

□

Gone! (Temporarily.) EBMUD work on Richmond Street has resulted in the removal of one speed bump. Fantastic! Enjoy it while you can. What really ought to disappear are those ridiculous metering lights at freeway ramps that really accomplish nothing.

□

Deana Martin (daughter of the King of Cool), says she drinks Margaritas only on days that end in "y." Cheers, folks!

Sidewalk Vendors: Facts and Legality



This popular sidewalk vendor at Hill & San Pablo, by Safeway, operates in the evening and well into the night, every day. It is clearly one of the more elaborate El Cerrito popups with several propane grills, lighting, and offering a variety of food and beverages.

BY JOHN C. STASHIK

MEMBERS have contacted the *Byline* regarding the rules and regulations for sidewalk vendors. So the *Byline* asked City staff, to ascertain the facts. Here they are. This is a summary of the Act; actual language is too lengthy to print.

□

Per SB946, the Safe Sidewalk Vending Act, signed into law in 2018, sidewalk vending is allowed. The City is looking into creating specific regulations regarding sidewalk vending consistent with state law, as the practice is becoming more popular locally. Sidewalk vendors are still required to obtain a business license.

SB946 includes the following elements:

- Prohibits all current sidewalk vending regulations unless they are consistent with SB 946 and prohibits cities from imposing sidewalk vending regulations "within specific parts of the public right of way," or within certain neighborhoods or areas.
- Prohibits cities from limiting the total number of vendors unless doing so is directly related to "objective health, safety or welfare concerns."
- Authorizes cities to adopt time, place and manner restrictions for sidewalk vending, provided those restrictions are directly related to "objective health, safety or welfare concerns." To the extent limitations on hours are needed, they cannot be unduly restrictive.
- Continues to allow cities to require compliance with sanitary standards, ADA requirements and that food preparation be consistent with Health and Safety Code sections 113700 *et seq*.
- Cities can still require that vendors obtain a permit for sidewalk vending or a business license and require them to possess a sellers permit from the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration. El Cerrito is allowed to require a business license per the City's Municipal Code.
- Allows cities to prohibit from areas zoned exclusively residential "stationary sidewalk vendors"—vendors who remain at a fixed location, but cities cannot prohibit "roaming sidewalk vendors"—vendors who move from place-to-place and only stop to complete a transaction.
- Allows cities to prohibit vending within the vicinity of a farmers market or swap meet or areas designated for use pursuant to a temporary special permit.
- Allows cities to impose sidewalk vending regulations for public parks, provided they are necessary to ensure the use and enjoyment of the park and necessary to "prevent an undue concentration of commercial activity that unreasonably interferes with the scenic and natural character of the [a] park."

John Z & M.A. Hays

BY ROBERT ROGERS

ONE OF THE most accomplished people in the East Bay is John Ziesenhenne. His long and storied career spans business, politics, philanthropy, volunteerism, and much more.

Ziesenhenne, whose friends call him “John Z.” or just “Z” for short, is the CEO of M.A. Hays Company, full service insurance brokers, doing business in Richmond for well over a century.

M.A. Hays opened in 1912, when Hays obtained his insurance license. Hays died in 1938, and his son took over the company. Bob Campbell came to work with the junior Hays in the early 1970s. Campbell eventually became the owner, and Hays eased into retirement in 1979. Campbell hired Ziesenhenne in March of 1983. “I decided I liked it here,” Ziesenhenne said with a wry grin.

Ziesenhenne has amassed an impeccable reputation for excellence while serving thousands of people throughout the region, including many local leaders of business, politics, philanthropy, and more.

But Ziesenhenne doesn’t forget his heroes. Many watch over him in his office, which is adorned with photos and artwork that tell a rich story of legends of sport, business, politics, and more.

Asked to pick one hero above all the rest, Ziesenhenne leans back in his chair. The name is clear:

“In terms of someone who wore two hats, political and business, it would be Bob Campbell for sure,” Ziesenhenne says, shooting a glance at one of his photos of the late State Assemblymember and Richmond icon. “Bob was a people person with a big heart, always for the underdog, the kind of person who always found something good about everybody.”

Ziesenhenne is himself a man of many hats. He was born in the old Richmond Hospital on 23rd Street, and graduated Harry Ells High School in 1975. Next came Contra Costa College and UC Berkeley, from which he graduated in 1980. He’s always lived in Richmond.

During a wide-ranging discussion in his office, which is lovingly adorned with enough pieces to fill a museum wing, Ziesenhenne reflected on the industry, his past and future, and his passion for his West County community. Clad in a peach Oxford and vibrant, multi-colored necktie, “John Z.” proudly showed his collections of ephemera one moment and gave sage business advice the next.

Among the great pieces in his office include campaign photos of all three Kennedy brothers—Jack, Robert, and Teddy—and odes to legends of sport like Willie Mayes and Jackie Robinson.

Ziesenhenne has always mixed personal with business, and it has been a winning combination.



John C. Stashik

“When it comes to insuring your assets, it’s valuable to have that personal touch,” he said. “You develop a relationship with us, and we know you, your situation, and your needs and we can find the right level of coverage for you. Familiarity with the client, and trust, we work very hard at serving our clients.”

But Ziesenhenne’s excellence in business is in part due to his service outside of the confines of his office.

His resumé of civic service is extensive. He was elected to serve on the Richmond City Council for three terms, from 1981 to 1993. He has served at various times as an elder at his church, a board of directors member of the YMCA, Richmond Museum, Boys & Girls Club, Richmond PAL, and the Richmond Chamber of Commerce.

Of his stint on the Richmond City Council, he’s especially proud. Off the top of his head, Ziesenhenne rattled off five of what he considered the most important accomplishments of the Council on which he served:

- Joining with a Master Developer to build Marina Bay.
- Seeing the completion of the John T. Knox Freeway.
- Initiating the construction of the Richmond Parkway.
- Infrastructure improvements along San Pablo Avenue.
- Establishing a Police Commission.

County Supervisor John Gioia is one of Ziesenhenne’s many friends and supporters.

“I’ve known John since we were rival local high school track athletes and worked on his first successful Richmond City Council campaign in 1981,” Gioia said. “John has always cared about improving life here in West County—whether in his role as a Councilmember, local business owner, or non-profit leader. He’s always demonstrated commitment to service to our community with the highest personal and professional integrity.”

Success in business, like success in public service, is based on building a reputation for excellence and integrity. “Our

■ See M.A. Hays Co., page 6



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STORY, PHOTOS BY ROBERT ROGERS

THERE'S A special pizzeria in our area, and the flavors, quality ingredients, and low prices are so good, El Cerritos are flocking over the border to get a taste.

It's Richmond Pizza House, a labor of love for local entrepreneurial brothers Zack and Jay Qassas since 2018.

Located at 12343 San Pablo Avenue, just south of the I-80 overpass, the big "Pizza

House" lettering in trademark red and green makes for striking curb appeal.

This is Renaissance Pizzeria,

just as adept at gyros, pastas, salads, sandwiches, shawarma, and delectable desserts as it is with its famous pizza.

Walking through the glass doors and onto the multicolored tiles, aromas wafting from the bustling kitchen, customers are invariably greeted by friendly faces and welcoming voices. Clean, comfy booths are there for diners. Delivery and takeout are always available.

Something as simple as a two-topping pizza (you can get two large, two-topping pizzas for just \$35.99!) can show just how special this eatery is.

The crust and cheese perfectly blend together. The crust is both spongy and light. It supports the weight and the flavor of the toppings without overpowering them, and is fibrous enough to not dissolve in your mouth too quickly.

The ingredients boast a nice balance while the flavors burst in a way only made possible by fresh, quality ingredients.

Plus, Zack and Jay and their team are gracious with their customers. One patron mentioned his daughter was having a birthday that night, and soon that patron was walking away with a free, hand-crafted chocolate cookie cake—and a complimentary birthday candle.

Richmond Pizza House, unsurprisingly, has elite ratings on Yelp. One satisfied customer wrote:

"I called in for a lunch pick up and was told it would be ready within ten minutes. When I arrived, my order for a small BBQ chicken pizza was fresh out of the oven! The spot was open and quite spacious, and the aroma of pizza sifted through the air. Service was quick and I was able to take my box home for a good price! I was tempted on the way back home, so I tried a slice in the car. It was so magical! Not only was it nice and hot, the flavors balanced out and it wasn't too cheesy or too saucy. I really liked how the crust was soft and that the pie was filled with tons of flavor. I'm so excited to come back again and try another pizza!"

Gourmet Taste at a Bargain Price



Above: Jay and Zack Qassas with super large pies

To watch mouthwatering and fun reels, go to Instagram @richmondpizzahouse. You'll be dining on the real thing in no time!

Richmond Pizza House

Orders: 510-766-5555

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Open Daily from 10 a.m.

richmondpizzahouse.com

IRS LOVE LETTER

■ Continued from page 1

and a QR code to quickly access your account to make a payment or apply for a payment plan. It also has options to help if you cannot pay in full. Use these tools to settle your debt yourself. LT38 is issued only to taxpayers who have already been in the Automated Collection System of the IRS and have received a collection letter.



Another change that started in January 2024 is an increase in time between the letters that the IRS must send you before they can legally take money out of your accounts. That means you will have more time to pay your bill before they start to levy your bank account.

The best way to determine the status of your IRS account is to access your account online at irs.gov/payments/your-online-account.

Financial Harmony Tax Resolution is a Chamber member that can help you. Our only business is IRS representation. Recently, we reduced a client's IRS debt from \$466,762 to \$17,759 through the IRS's *Offer-in-Compromise* program.

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M.A. HAYS CO.

■ Continued from page 4

best advertising is by word of mouth. It's very strong, and it's more important now because of all the impersonal technology we use today."

With the recent tumult in the insurance industry in California, a trusted broker like M.A. Hays may be just what concerned local residents and business leaders need. In the aftermath of an era of unprecedented fire destruction, starting with the horrific blazes of 2017, insurance companies have fled the state in droves. Prices are climbing and the number of available policies are dwindling.

"Whether you've recently got a

nonrenewal notice, or you're looking to buy a property, or you're just concerned about rates, my advice would be get ahold of an insurance broker right away," he said. "It's a very challenging industry right now."

When he isn't helping people with their insurance needs, Ziesenhenne enjoys golf, attending San Francisco Giants games, and dining at area restaurants. Always on the lookout for a new spot, Ziesenhenne said he was excited by the growing El Cerrito culinary scene.

"I haven't been to Dolly's yet," he said, referring to the new Italian deli in El Cerrito. "I've heard great things and I have to try them out."

NIT PICKIN' EXPERTS

■ Continued from page 1

Glee's eclectic background has been a prelude to her biggest challenge—and triumph.

In January 2020, Glee bought NitPixies, a business that had fallen on hard times since its founding in 2007. Staff morale was low. Its second location in San Rafael was all but shuttered.

Just as she took the figurative plunge, the water was drained from the pool. The pandemic hit, and businesses in all sectors floundered. Considering that head lice is a scourge that spreads through social contact, NitPixies' future looked bleak.

But Glee wouldn't give up. She focused on quality, branding, marketing, staffing and other aspects of the business

she could control. When the pandemic lifted, many competitors were gone, but NitPixies emerged stronger.

Today, Glee operates in three locations, with the Oakland and San Rafael offices back up and running.

She and her husband are also raising their 2-year-old daughter, proving just how indefatigable Glee can be.

Looking back on it all, it seems almost impossible. Glee reflects with a smile while seated in her El Cerrito office, surrounded by verdant potted plants and cardboard boxes, remnants from the recent move-in.

"This is my dream," Glee said. "To have a shop, to be myself, a workaholic, and to help people with the best possible services and quality."

- ★ Buyers
- ★ Sellers
- ★ Probate
- ★ FSBO
- ★ Divorce
- ★ Expired



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

■ Continued from page 1

of a fife and drum band! We followed along on the sidelines letting him have his fun as he mimicked the musicians with his hands drumming the air. Damn, it was adorable!

What I loved about that day was how welcoming the participants were, and how diverse was the crowd. On a day for celebrating Irish culture, everyone could feel included; everyone could be Irish for the day. I think it is because we get reminded of our shared immigrant heritage. The Irish immigrant story is relatable to any immigrant. The struggle. The sacrifice. Parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and even ourselves (like our own Irishman, Jimmy Stuart) came here to set up shop, work a trade and make a better life that was unattainable back in the old country. We get to keep and maintain the good traditions, while those that aren't worth keeping fade away.

We also get to enjoy the blending of culture that shows up in cuisine. Corned Beef is my favorite example, being something not commonly consumed in Ireland. The Irish-American tradition came out of the immigrant experience. It was an affordable meat sold by Jewish delis, and incorporated in with the other traditional foods that were a part of a St. Patrick's Day feast: cabbage, potatoes, carrots, etc.

Bringing it back to El Cerrito, we are so very fortunate to have such a high concentration of immigrants who share their cuisine at many restaurants across town. This March, while you must absolutely come and try my Corned Beef and Cabbage Panini sandwich, I encourage you all to explore the world of flavors that are right here in our backyard in the spirit of our shared immigrant heritage. Who knows, maybe you'll discover a new tradition for your own table!

Slainte! Cheers! Prost! Skol! Ganbai!

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Page 7

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Photo Display and Reception

ENJOY refreshments and historic photos at a City Hall reception. The El Cerrito Historical Society invites you Friday, March 8th, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. to view photos from the recent Historic Photo contest.

Savory treats and beverages will be available. It will be a chance to meet some of the winners and others who submitted photos, and to learn more about El Cerrito history in a convivial setting. The event is free. The display runs through March 21st.



Parking Lot Record Swap

Sun., March 17 • 8 a.m.
(weather permitting)

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El Cerrito

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