



## Presidents Letter

Great weather! The Village is beginning to again have outdoor events! In April, we had our first picnic at 9th St. Park. There were sunhats, masks, and BIG smiles. I was so glad to meet one of our newest members, Mirella Iaccarino. It was so great for us all to be together. The Vallejo group met in Rose Sonnen's garden. And the first post-pandemic excursion was to the Ruth Bancroft gardens.

Watch for more get togethers this month. On the 12th there will be another picnic, this one at City Park. Hope to see you there!

Zoom will still be around; in fact, we have found that some programs work better on Zoom. The movie group, meditation, and cooking programs will continue on Zoom. We will be discontinuing some programs that have had low attendance. The speaker series will continue on

Zoom until the library reopens for groups. Last month we had a great Master Garden program on Spring gardening. If you missed it, you can view it on our website.

If you still prefer to stay home, our next speaker series program will be of interest to you. Well Connected is a program that provides a virtual community for older adults to meet for life-long learning and programs online at no cost to participants.

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of one of our inaugural members and volunteers. Anita Argentieri. Our hearts go out to fellow board member Gerry Forcier and family.

Carquinez Village is continuing to reach out and look for ways to connect with the larger community, and in Benicia the Human Services

Board is about supporting those initiatives.

The purpose of the Benicia Human Services Board is to support the broad economic, educational, and social goals of the City of Benicia by assessing the human service needs, making recommendations to the City Council regarding funding of effective human service agencies and programs, and evaluating those services and programs on behalf of the community.

Recently we applied to the Human Services Board for funding to provide scholarships and work on an intergenerational project with youth in our community. Another recipient of Human Services Board funds is the Kyle Hyland Foundation, and we are looking forward to bringing the members of both our organizations together to explore connections.

– Susan Neuhaus

## Going Back to Normal

After more than a year of social distancing and zoom meetings, I think we are all eager to begin transitioning back to normal life. On that note, we are excited to announce that Carquinez Village will soon begin to host monthly outdoor picnics in our local parks!

We are also planning a group trip to Bancroft Gardens soon. As many of our members and volunteers have been vaccinated by now, we feel that we can safely gather again if we observe certain guidelines.



For everyone to feel safe at functions and gatherings, we will soon be asking all members and volunteers to let us know your current vaccination status. Look out for an

email or in the post regarding this topic. If you are unable to get vaccinated at this time, please let us know so that we can make plans to accommodate you.

Please note that our vaccination policy does not replace the safety policies that we already have in place, especially when it comes to transportation to and from appointments. By filling out your vaccination form, you are helping us get a picture of where we are as a community which will help us to plan future Carquinez Village gatherings.

– Helen Hughes

## Army Ants on the move in Africa

When I lived in Leopoldville, Congo, there were numerous animals that kept us “on guard.” Besides snakes, my nemesis was the army ants. These are ants, who do not have a “home,” are constantly on the move, and travel in groups of thousands.

One morning I was in our ground floor kitchen preparing some food when I looked out the window and saw a black river passing right under the window—an enormous group of army ants. To get them away from the house, I threw boiling water out on the river, only to find that they moved their column INSIDE the window! The ceiling and walls instantly turned black and in motion. That freaked me out. I began throwing boiling water at the ceiling, walls and floor of the kitchen trying to drive them back outside. The more water I threw, the further inside the ants moved.

It wasn't until Stanley, a Congolese servant, arrived that I stopped throwing water. I was sloshing in water and exhausted.

“Oh Madam, what are you doing?” he exclaimed. He explained that the ants really preferred moving outside the house and that if left alone they would eventually resume their trek. He led me upstairs to the veranda and made me



sit there with a glass of iced tea while he returned to the kitchen to clean up the mess.

Eventually, after continuing to move through the kitchen, sure enough, the ants did move back outside. I learned a lesson: never interfere with a river of army ants. Let them march undeterred.

– Marty Stockard

# Johannes Brahms: A Biography, by Jan Swafford

New York Times Notable Book of the Year



Having lived through Eliot’s “April is the cruellest month...mixing memory and desire,” and dearest Browning’s lament “Oh to be in England, Now that April’s there,” from, of all fabulous places in the world, Firenze, I am ecstatic with May’s beginnings and, hopefully, the secession of our year-long pandemic.

During this covid time, with hours of isolation, there is much leisure time for contemplation, perhaps time to pursue interests with more academic intensity. This has brought me to a new literary discovery: author Jan Swafford, American composer, professor, and musicologist, with his amazing biographies of Beethoven, Mozart, Ives, and Brahms. The most recent publication is Swafford’s 600-plus-page bio of Mozart. Too many words-no!!! It was a compelling read about the gifted charmer who left us too, too soon, but left us humming and pinning for charming opera tunes and endless symphonic music.

The bio of Brahms, all 699 pages, was more compelling for me, as he is my favorite composer. Brahms completed his first symphony late in life, and lore has it that he worked on it in Ziegelhausen, a darling little village, outside of Heidelberg on the Neckar river. Living directly across the river from Ziegelhausen, I joyously, each morning, bowed and greeted the day with, “Guten Morgen, Herr Brahms.”

Brahms lived in the shadows of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert and was a contemporary of Wagner, Liszt, Dvorak, Mahler, Stravinsky, and Bruckner, just to name a few. He lived in the times that saw the unification of Germany as a nation, travel on

trains, electric lights, the phonograph, and the gradual diminishment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Swafford brilliantly details Brahms’ personal life, from his Hamburg childhood, to being declared the protégé of Robert Schumann—who called him the next musical messiah of Germanic music—through his long, wildly acclaimed, successful musical life, to his death in his beloved Vienna.

Stafford chronicles the process, history, and critical acceptance of all Brahms’ works. He also discusses at length, and in technical detail, each musical composition, which for the non-musician could make comprehension difficult. I solved the problem by listening to the discussed music on YouTube. There, one lovely, fascinating find was a discussion and presentation of the third symphony by San Francisco’s emeritus conductor, Herbert Blomstedt.

Jan Swafford’s Brahms biography has been critically endorsed, not only as a definitive biography, but also as an extremely great read.

– Carolyn Fallon

## New Member: Tamra Amato

Tamra is a native of South Dakota. She lived elsewhere in the Bay Area before moving to Benicia thirty years ago. She retired after working for a behavioral health company and running her graphics business. She is an artist and a photographer.

Tamra is interested in participating in many of our Village activities once we can begin in-person activities. She also has a lot of ideas for additional activities and projects.



## Winemaking

Oak Barrel Winecraft is a wine supply store at 1443 San Pablo Ave in Berkeley. Here you will find all you need to begin making wine (and it is even more fun to do this and split the cost with a friend!).

From Oak Barrel (note: almost all this equipment is reusable) get: 5-gal. juice concentrate (\$89); a 10-gallon trash can and lid (\$35); yeast (\$3); 6-gallon plastic carboy (\$25) + airlock and rubber stopper; hydrometer and jar to measure wine (\$13); a wine “thief” to pull out tastes (\$9); sulfite to protect the wine. Add oak chips (\$2-4) to flavor the wine. You also need a thick stir stick.

Start by sterilizing everything with sulfite (1 teaspoon to 1 quart water). Mix a 1/2-cup of grape concentrate with a cup of warm water, then add 1 packet of yeast. Put mix on your refrigerator -- the warmth will start the fermentation in a short time. When the mix bubbles, you are ready to make wine!!

### Part Two

You have created the starter for your wine. Now put the grape juice concentrate in the trash can, slowly add starter mix and 6 gallons of water, stir with the large stick, and put on the lid.

Occasionally, dip the hydrometer jar into the juice, drop in the hydrometer and, when it stops bobbing, see what it measures to get wine alcohol content. When the juice measures as wine, put the oak chips into the carboy.

*...winemaking continued*

Now get 1/2-inch plastic hose and sterilize it. Then run it into the trash can. Suck on the other end of the hose until wine in trash can is moving, then put the hose into the carboy. Drain into the carboy.

Put the rubber stopper into the carboy top, add water to half-fill the airlock, and push it into the stopper. The wine will finish its fermentation as the airlock lets out fermentation byproducts but keeps out oxygen, which kills wine.

It takes a month or more to mature. Keep tasting until you like it. Add 1/4 teaspoon of sulfite when wine reaches 13%~ alcohol to stop the fermentation and prevent oxidation.

Final step: bottling!  
See next month.

*– Greg Plant*



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## April in Vallejo

Well, April 2021 sure looked different than April 2020, and for that I'm very grateful.

The Vallejo contingent of Carquinez Village had its first in-person gathering in over a year on April 21, 2021. Like the rest of the Village, we've spent 2020 and the first months of 2021 in the land of Zoom, with its broken connections, slow modems, and delightful surprises. But what a pleasure to meet and greet each other in person! All of us hope this is a harbinger of better days.

Rose Sonnen, our hostess, opened her well-manicured backyard and patio so we could comfortably socially distance and share our greetings and news. Her dog, Madelaine, was perhaps the most socially adept of the guests. Madelaine was very polite, obviously enjoyed our company, occasionally checked out empty plates, and was certainly the spryest amongst us. Her quick leaps onto empty cushioned chairs were done with grace and aplomb.

How nice it is to realize the joys of human gatherings with intelligent well-mannered people.

*– Joe Athey*

## The Kyle Hyland Foundation

The Kyle Hyland Foundation for Teen Support (KHF) was founded in 2015, after Kyle Hyland took his life at the age of 16. As a legacy for Kyle, the mission of KHF is to establish a teen center in Benicia where teens can be provided emotional support through mentoring, counseling, music, and art.

The KHF realized this goal with the opening of the Benicia Teen Center (BTC) in January 2016. Currently located at 1135 Church Street in a 4-bedroom/2-bath house, KHF is ideally located directly across the street from Benicia High School (BHS).

The BTC serves a vital need in our community by providing a “home away from home” for ALL teens to hang out and enjoy themselves in a stress-free and creative environment. The KHF also offers teen forums, educational workshops, counseling/mental health referrals and

resources, as well as a teen/community awareness program on topics and issues pertinent to teens. In the fall of 2021, KHF plan to partner with Carquinez Village to introduce a new intergenerational program where teens will be connected with seniors. This program hopes to not only improve social and emotional skills of the youth, but also, for seniors, to decrease social isolation and increase their sense of belonging, self-esteem, and well-being.

– Susan Neuhaus



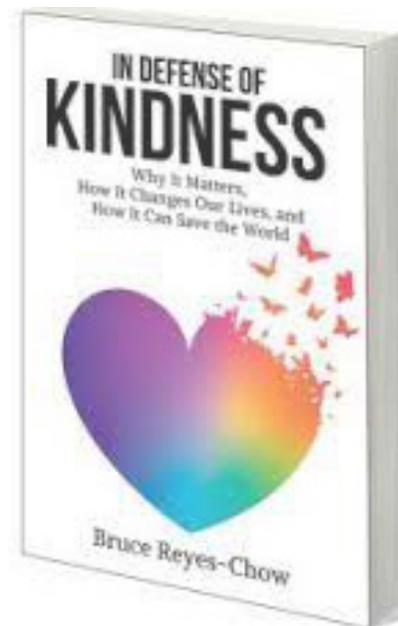
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## In Defense of Kindness

Join Heritage Presbyterian Church’s Better World program for a Zoom meeting on kindness and how we can improve our lives, communities, and, yes, even the world, bringing us closer to “peace on earth.” The lecture, Wednesday, May 26, at 7 pm, features noted author and pastor Bruce Reyes-Chow, and will use his new book, In Defense of Kindness, to show how we can each choose kindness as a new way to experience community and wholeness. Using a playful spirit, tender heart, and an unwavering commitment to justice, Reyes-Chow invites us to explore the many ways kindness can bring healing, wholeness, and hope. RSVP to get the link to this event to [betterworldbenicia@gmail.com](mailto:betterworldbenicia@gmail.com). A link will be sent to you right away.

In Defense of Kindness is a great read! The book is available from Bookshop Benicia, 636 First St., Benicia, (707)747-5155, for \$16.99.

– Pat Plant



## Relax with Meditation

Every Thursday at 3 pm, on Zoom, Carquinez Village leader Janice Magner gathers members to meditate and relax, mellow, and renew energy and spirit.

Janice, a long-time meditator, gathers us briefly to share, then she leads us into guided meditation to slow down and quiet our busy minds. Janice then offers silent meditation to help people deepen quiet and relaxation. Meditation gets easier with practice.

We enjoy this hour of bliss that helps us live our lives more peacefully. We'd suggest that you try meditation if you feel the need to slow your sometime frantic pace.

As alternative health advocate Deepak Chopra says, "Meditation is a way to purify and quiet the mind through rejuvenating the body." As aging people with busy schedules and minds, "rejuvenating" seems like a worthy goal. Sign up on the Village website list of events. Hope to see you at one of our Thursday meditation sessions!

– Pat Plant

## Ask the Village

**Question:** *What do I need to know to have the best Zoom experience?*

1. Be on time
2. Mute your microphone when entering a Zoom event or when not speaking
3. Turn on your camera and remember that you can be seen
4. Turn off your camera if you need to do something that may be distracting to others
5. Control background activities when the camera is on
6. Sit eye level with your camera
7. Have some soft light to illuminate your face

### Tips about CV Zoom Meetings

The host will let you into the meeting. If you get an alert that says, "The host is in another meeting," close the Zoom app and come back in 5 minutes.

If no participants have signed in by 10 minutes after the scheduled start time, the zoom host may stop the meeting and close it.

– Cynthia Hellmuth



## Remembering Anita Argentieri

Anita Argentieri passed away suddenly on April 19th. She was the wife of Gerry Forcier. Anita was small in stature but could fill up a room with her sense of humor and infectious laugh. She had a long battle with diabetes, but lived her life to the fullest and did not let this define her. She loved art, cooking, her family, the children she taught, and her three grandchildren. She is missed.

– By Alan and Alice Plutchok



## Editor's Notes

Something for everyone here—from a book review, to instructions for winemaking, to information that helps make your membership a good value. So good to be opening up again to live events!

Thanks to Marty Stockard, Joe Athey, Carolyn Fallon, Cynthia Helmuth, Helen Hughes, Greg and Pat Plant, Sally Radigan, Helen Hughes, and Susan Neuhaus for their contributions. Alan and Alice Plutchok tells us what a loving and lovely person we lost this month.

Mary Eichbauer has joined our team. She edits everything after I do and she finds things. Thank you and welcome to Mary!

Our heartfelt condolences go to Gerry Forcier on the death of his wife, Anita Argentieri. We will miss her bright smile and kind touch.

*– Lois Requist*

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