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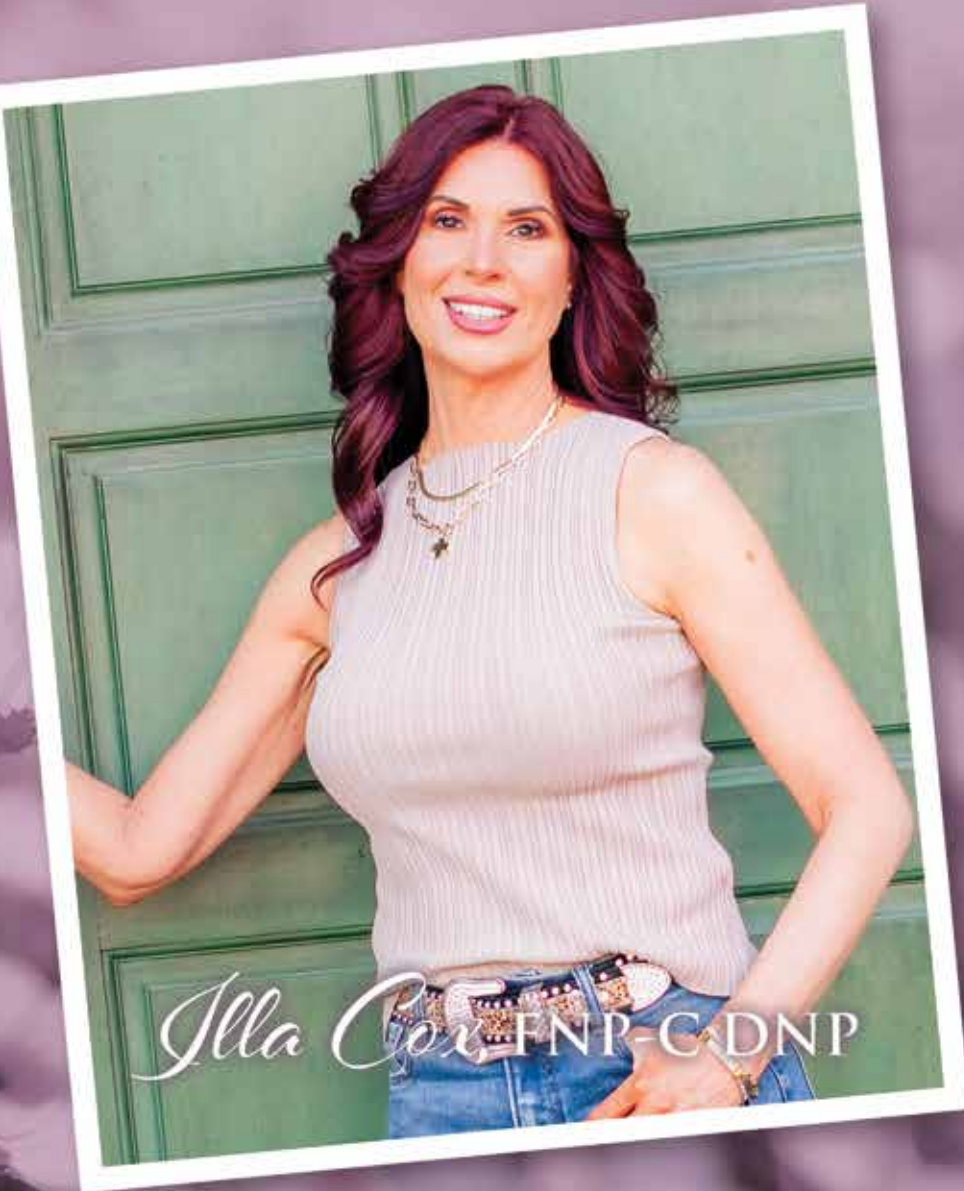


*Arezou
Soleimani*

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Arezou Soleimani: Serving Every Single Item with Care

The heartbeat of a community is often found in the places its residents gather. In our area, Arezou Soleimani and her team have created a group of beloved restaurants that draw people in and create their own culture.



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THERE'S *Always* SOMETHING TO DO!

I can't help but smile when folks say there just isn't anything to do in our region. I must be missing something, because I feel like there is so much going on around here! The *HERLIFE* calendar is always a good reference, as well as Visit Stockton and Visit Lodi to get information on engaging, cultural and food-related community events! Wineries across the region have talented local entertainment to enjoy as you sip wine under the pergolas and huge oak trees. Our region is rich in cultural and lifestyle festivals – most recently the Runabouts on the River Classic Boat Show, Rose Garden Tour, the Jewish Food Festival, Cinco de Mayo, Festa Italiana, and 4th of July Celebrations, to name a few! There are farmers markets, concerts in parks and art shows across the county. A picnic at Micke Grove, a ballgame at Banner Island, basketball at the arena is a "must-plan," and the anticipation of indoor football and ice hockey coming to town fills the calendar with great sporting events. This fall is also getting booked up. You will want to check out the Lincoln Center Anniversary event benefitting the San Joaquin Historical Museum, the 180 Gala, Family Day at the Park, Concours d'Elegance, a few golf tournaments and the Goodwill Helping Hands Dinner honoring Mary-Elizabeth Eberhardt. This doesn't include other celebrations offered by organizations such as Family Promise, The Loel Center, the Sheriff's Foundation, and many others.

One common denominator in these experiences is savory, culturally rich cuisine! As we focus on food and wine throughout these



pages, I am reminded of the fabulous offerings from local food trucks, to mom-and-pop cafes, and sit-down restaurants with diverse menus, wine bars in downtown locations, and wineries scattered throughout the county. We have so many options to gather and enjoy meals together.

And if you prefer to gather at home and prepare meals with friends and family – not only is our weather beautiful to plan dinners on your backyard patio, just add great BBQ ribs or steak and the freshest fruits and vegetables in the world and you have a fabulous evening around the table. Might I suggest a fun game of pinochle or Five

Crowns to top off the evening!

Last, but not least – a great BIG Congratulations to LODI! We are so very proud of you being named America's Favorite Small Town by *Parade Magazine*! Nothing screams small town fabulousness (is that a word?) like Lodi. They certainly fill the food and wine category – yet so much more. Read all about it on page 22.

As summer comes to an end and kiddos are getting back to school, I hope you had a wonderful season with all the people you love. I know the vacation time I took was a wonderful time to rest and relax, and reflect on how thankful and grateful I am – for my family, the friends in my life, and a fulfilling career that has brought so many fabulous people into my life. I continue my year with joyful expectations. So far, those expectation are being met!

Blessings,

Cami

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contributing members of our communities.

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Complimentary digital subscriptions are available by registering
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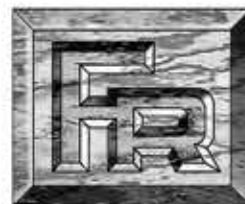
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Beauty of the Valley



Jewels on the Vine

Photographed on a peaceful late-summer evening in a vineyard in Lodi, California—recently recognized as America’s Favorite Small Town—this cluster of grapes seemed to glow from within as the last rays of sunlight filtered through the vines. The interplay of radiant fruit, lush green leaves, and warm golden light transformed an ordinary vineyard scene into a work of art. Their jewel-like colors and graceful form serve as a reminder that some of nature’s most extraordinary beauty is found all around us here in the Valley. In a region celebrated for its world-class vineyards and rich agricultural heritage, moments like this reveal the artistry of the land itself, where light, color, and the changing seasons come together to create something truly timeless.



Kevin Richtik is a Brooks Institute of Photography graduate and the owner of Stockton-based Caroline Photography, a studio deeply rooted in the community.

He has photographed thousands of local families and worked with a wide range of regional and national companies with his photography appearing in numerous publications. Kodak has featured his work in worldwide advertising to showcase its products.

In addition, Kevin creates a wide range of fine art images, from sweeping landscapes of the San Joaquin Valley and is creator of the ongoing Beauty of Stockton photo project, a weekly series that highlights the city’s unique and often overlooked strengths, showcasing Stockton’s vibrant, positive spirit. The project has expanded to include the Beauty of the Valley.

You can view and share each week’s Beauty of the Valley post at: www.facebook.com/kevin.richtik or www.instagram.com/carolinephotography209



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PRIME TABLE

STEAKHOUSE

EST. 2016, STOCKTON, CA

Arezou Soleimani

SERVING EVERY SINGLE ITEM WITH CARE

BY RACHEL FENTON
PHOTOS BY KEVIN RICHTIK, CAROLINE PHOTOGRAPHY

A city has many hearts, places where life flows in and, rejuvenated, goes back out to breathe energy throughout the rest of the community. These places cultivate an atmosphere that brings people in and brings people back.

Arezou Soleimani is the force behind one of our region's strongest heartbeats, a sisterhood of restaurants that help define our culinary scene. "I'm grateful to be a part of a tight-knit ownership group where

our expertise has been cultivated to expand into every corner of the operations," Arezou said. As one of the masterminds behind beloved restaurants such as Market Tavern, La Mesa and Prime Table, she's known for greeting guests with a quick smile and old-timers with a loving heckle. But most of all, she is known for the values that stand as the backbone of the restaurants she pours herself into, choosing people over profit and always putting local and organic sourcing above all else.



BEGINNINGS

Arezou inherited an indomitable work ethic from both her parents. Her father, Mansoor, worked in sociology and her mother, Parvin, held double doctorates in child psychology and sociology. Parvin also founded Hopeland Preschool with her husband and ran it for over 40 years before retiring. “My dad gave me really good advice,” Arezou said, “Such as, ‘Don’t expect people to do anything you’re not willing to do yourself.’” And her signature look that can freeze rowdy patrons in their place? “My mother says I got it from her,” she said with a laugh, thinking back to her mother’s decades of running the preschool. Her parents’ example of resiliency and ingenuity set a standard of excellence for Arezou that helped shape everything she did, whether in academics, extra-curriculars or the jobs she worked along the way.

Those who know Arezou also know that she wears her heart on her sleeve. Although she may be unafraid of speaking out against injustice and unwavering in her convictions, her selfless work with the animal protection league and hospice is also a glimpse into the depth of her love for her local community and its most vulnerable populations. Even as a youth, she strove to be the best version of herself, from being a walk-on freshman varsity player in soccer, basketball and softball to carving out her own career path in the restaurant industry.

A graduate of the University of San Francisco, Arezou initially contemplated pursuing law, following her passion for making the world a better place and being a voice for those who struggle to be heard. She moved back to her hometown of Stockton and began to work as a paralegal while also bartending at Mallard’s, an eatery that was itself a long-time landmark of the local commu-

“It’s so beautiful to be in a space where the team’s shared passion drives every decision. It’s really important for us. Integrity, for me, is the reason I get up every morning.”

AREZOU SOLEIMANI



nity before its closure in the late 2000s. Her experiences behind its bar helped her become rooted in Stockton's heartbeat, connecting her closely with the people she met and served on a daily basis. "That's what I love about Stockton; it's the salt of the earth," Arezou said.

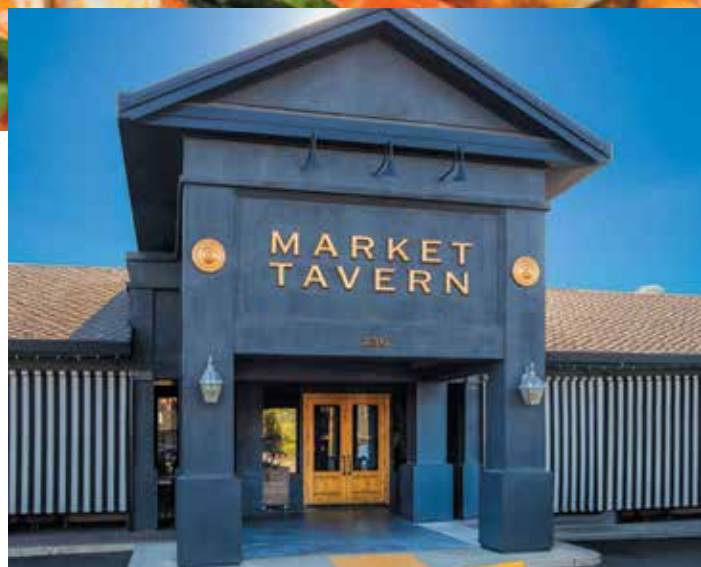
CHARTING HER COURSE

Arezou's connections encouraged her to expand into the restaurant industry, and she began to look at bartending as more than a side job, instead seeing it as a career that allowed her to connect with and care for her local community in ways that law never could. She accepted an opportunity with Andy Pappas to collaborate and open Papapavlo's, a Greek restaurant that soon became an integral part of Stockton's culinary culture.

Arezou continued to learn and grow in her field, but she had a specific dream she wanted to pursue. "I always wanted to do organics," she said. In 2011, her chance opened up after a few conversations with Phil Wong and the encouragement of their late friend Jodie Lennon, whom she met through her work at Papapavlo's. Together, she and Phil Wong began the process of opening their first restaurant in their now impressive repertoire, Market Tavern. "We hit the ground running; we had no idea what we were doing," Arezou laughed. Though the timeline took longer than they initially expected, they were incredibly proud of the result when their doors opened for the first time. "Phil never cuts corners," she said, speaking of the care and intentionality that went into every detail of the restaurant, from their choice of location in Lincoln Center to their designer, Michael Brennan from the San Francisco area. And now, over a decade after they first opened the doors, they're often as busy on Tuesday evenings as they are on weekends. It's a clear sign of their success, given that "There isn't a block in Stockton you can go into that there isn't at least one decent, if not great, restaurant," she said.

THE FIRST BUT NOT LAST

Market Tavern's ambiance is one that is simultaneously laid back and upscale. The rich, dark wood tones are tempered by its sleek industrial lighting, and its tables and booths are secluded enough to



enjoy conversation without feeling isolated from the lively thrum of the restaurant itself. The bar boasts an impressive array of craft cocktails, including multiple spins on the classic Old-Fashioned to specialty drinks that showcase seasonal flavors. The outdoor patio beckons passersby to stop in and, if not stay for a sit-down meal, at least check out their grab-n-go service market that has ready-made meals available, along with freshly baked bread or a perfectly paired bottle of wine.

Market Tavern's menu itself changes seasonally but always takes a fresh spin on traditional American fare. It's common to see comfort foods such as chicken pot pie and wood-fired pizza alongside dishes such as furikake fries, Thai style Brussels sprouts with ginger, lime and fish sauce, and crispy duck leg confit. It's a celebration of the things that make California so unique, an abundance of fresh produce mingled with the abundance of beautiful cultures. And culture is part of what remains so important to Arezou in her career. "I built my career from the ground up in hospitality, so my stake in these restaurants is as personal as it is professional," Arezou said. "We are not just trying to shape menus; we're trying to shape a culture."

EXPANSION

The culture she has helped shape quickly became a part of Stockton and has now expanded beyond just the local community.



Market Tavern has opened two other locations in Lodi and Dublin, both thriving as much as the original location. After their success with Market Tavern, the ownership group branched out into two sister restaurants as well, Prime Table, an upscale steak house with a swanky vibe reminiscent of Hollywood's Golden Age, and La Mesa, a Mexican eatery that brims with bright colors and brighter flavors. Every restaurant with Arezou's involvement is built on the same conviction she holds so dearly, prioritizing organic and local ingredients in every dish on the menu. "We don't compromise what we do. Only local stuff," she said emphatically. As she spoke about her career, she continued to bring the focus back to her team and her staff, describing how every venture is a result of many people collaborating their best efforts to create the best version of the restaurants, from the food to the ambiance. "It's so beautiful to be in a space where the team's shared passion drives every decision," Arezou said. "It's really important for us. Integrity, for me, is the reason I get up every morning."

THE LONG VIEW

She is open about her business strategy and the way she describes it is refreshingly blunt and straightforward: "You could rack up whatever money you want with high-priced items, or you could serve every single item with care, not make as much on the bottom line and create a repeat customer," she said. Her first priority isn't making the largest profit, but rather the ability to stand behind each ingredient and dish that the restaurant serves. Every item is made in house, from their breads to their desserts. Arezou pushes for excellence in every aspect, from the menu to staff's training. "Take the long cut," she always tells her staff. "It's not worth the short cut."

Exciting things are in the future for this sisterhood of restaurants. Although Prime Table has been closed since late 2025 for an extensive remodel and expansion, it is slated to reopen by the end of 2026. Many are looking forward to that day, missing its luxurious feel and the way it brought back the concept of eating out as an experience that deserved dressing up in our Sunday best. "Prime Table is my pride and joy," Arezou said fondly. "A 1920s steakhouse, beautiful, classic, a place to relax for the grownups."

BRIOCHE AND MORE

When Prime Table's doors open once again, it will have a new companion, a beautiful Parisian bakery, Brioche. Arezou's excitement about



it is palpable. “Bubbles and beautiful coffee drinks and really beautiful pastries,” she described as she painted the ambiance of their newest venture. She has hopes for La Mesa too, including a larger bar expansion. But when asked about what sets this restaurant sisterhood apart, Arezou has one answer: “People always ask me, ‘What makes the restaurants special?’ It’s the humans,” she said. “We go shoulder to shoulder with our guests.”

Arezou continually voices her love for the community that has supported her and their restaurants since day one, emphasizing how much they appreciate every person who walks through their doors. Their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic especially fortified her love of her local community as she saw how people came together to support local businesses in any way they could. She described how customers would consistently order meals to go from them to demonstrate their support from a distance, and how they would line up to sit outside in rain or heat and even help put away the tables at the end of the day. “The entire community stormed our doors,” Arezou said. Her gratitude toward the people who have supported the sisterhood of restaurants cannot be overstated, from the strong core of the ownership group to her chefs and staff to the customers who continue to show up and patronize them. “I just want to be that place where, if people have a choice, they choose to come in here with us,” she said.

Time and time again, Market Tavern and its sisterhood of restaurants has proven itself to be one of Stockton’s strongest heartbeats, and Arezou’s own heart is irrevocably entangled with it. And it is hearts like Arezou’s, ones driven by strength and gratitude and love, that create these places that set our community apart and keep its life force standing strong in spite of whatever hardships may come. ♦

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AREZOU SOLEIMANI

We are proud to celebrate Arezou Soleimani on her feature in HerLife Magazine — a recognition she has more than earned.

Across her multiple restaurants, Arezou has built a living love letter to local growers. Every menu at every table she oversees is a reflection of the season — rooted in local agriculture, delivered with intention and artistry.

The vision it takes to keep local produce at the heart of not one, but multiple kitchens — that is extraordinary. Arezou, you are the future of fresh.



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CHECK IN

with Dr. Ruby Gill

LET'S CHECK UP ON... WINE, WELLNESS AND THE MEDITERRANEAN MINDSET

By Dr. Ruby Gill, MD, ABOIM, ABFM
Double Board-Certified in Family & Integrative Medicine
Menopause Society Certified | Fellowship-Trained in Aesthetics

Living in Lodi means we're surrounded by one of California's greatest agricultural treasures. From vineyards and olive groves to vibrant farmers markets overflowing with seasonal produce, our community is uniquely positioned to embrace a lifestyle that mirrors one of the healthiest dietary patterns in the world, the Mediterranean diet.

As an integrative physician, one of the most common questions I hear from women in perimenopause and menopause is, "Can wine make my hot flashes worse?" The answer is yes—it certainly can. Alcohol is a known trigger for hot flashes in some women, likely because it causes blood vessels to dilate and can disrupt sleep, another major contributor to hormonal symptoms. If you've noticed your symptoms worsen after an evening glass of wine, your body may simply be telling you that less is better.

But that doesn't mean wine is the villain.

The Mediterranean diet, consistently associated with lower rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cognitive decline and overall mortality, has long included moderate wine consumption with meals for those who choose to drink. The emphasis, however, has never been the wine itself. The true health benefits come from the overall dietary pattern—abundant vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts, olive oil, seafood and minimal ultra-processed foods.

That perspective is especially relevant here in Lodi.

Our local farms provide access to fresh, nutrient-dense foods that are naturally rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals and polyphenols. Polyphenols are plant compounds that help combat oxidative stress and chronic inflammation, two biological processes linked to aging, insulin resistance, heart

disease and many chronic illnesses. Colorful berries, leafy greens, tomatoes, grapes, herbs, olives and even walnuts are excellent sources.

Red wine also contains polyphenols, including resveratrol, but it's important to keep this in perspective. The amount of resveratrol in a glass of wine is relatively small, and no one should begin drinking alcohol for health benefits alone. Instead, if you already enjoy wine, think of it as an accompaniment to a healthy meal, not the centerpiece.

Perhaps the greatest lesson we can learn from Mediterranean cultures isn't what fills the wine glass, but what fills the plate—and the company around the table. Meals are shared, portions are balanced, ingredients are fresh and eating is often a slower, more mindful experience. These habits support healthy blood sugar, improve satiety, reduce stress and foster meaningful social connections, all of which influence hormone health and longevity.

In Lodi, we're fortunate to have these ingredients right in our own backyard. Visiting the farmers market, choosing seasonal produce, supporting local agriculture and preparing meals at home are simple ways to bring the Mediterranean lifestyle to life.

Food has always been medicine. The secret isn't found in one nutrient, one supplement or one glass of wine. It's found in balance, quality and the everyday choices that nourish our bodies for years to come. •

Schedule your integrative medicine consultation with Dr. Ruby Gill today! Take the first step toward thriving again with personalized, evidence-based care tailored to your unique needs. Let Dr. Gill help you reclaim your health, confidence, and joy!

Disclaimer: This article is for informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Always consult with your physician or qualified healthcare professional before starting any new treatment, including supplements, to ensure it is appropriate for your individual health needs.



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SECURITY THAT PROTECTS THE CELEBRATION

Practical tips for hiring event security so guests remember the food, music, wine and moment, not the problems.

Picture a local food and wine festival. Music is playing, vendors are serving, guests are walking the grounds, and people are enjoying the food, wine, friends and community. The same thing happens at a fundraiser, corporate reception, wedding or private celebration. No matter the size, a good event feels easy to the guests because someone planned the hard parts before they arrived.

But what has to happen behind the scenes so guests remember the celebration, not the problems?

Security is rarely there because your invited guests are the problem; security is there to protect the experience by creating a safe environment for guests. Security helps manage parking, entry points, alcohol areas, vendor access, and the moments when small issues can grow into big problems.

I have seen this at events of many sizes. At Delta Protective Services, Kimberley Borgens and I have helped protect both large and small events ranging from receptions and corporate gatherings to large public events like the San Joaquin County Fair. Those experiences taught me that good security is not about making an event feel tense. It is about helping create a safe environment where the right people feel welcome, small problems are handled early, and guests can relax, enjoy themselves and leave your event with the memory of a great time.

Here are five tips to make sure the

security you hire supports the guest experience instead of creating unnecessary tension.

1. VERIFY THE LICENSE FIRST

Make sure the security company is properly licensed and insured. The company should have a valid PPO license, city business license, workers compensation insurance, and general liability insurance. Each officer should also have a valid California Guard Card issued by BSIS. Ask for copies from the security company and verify the information with the state before you sign an agreement.

2. DON'T HIRE ARMED SECURITY

Do not request armed security unless there is a specific threat that calls for it. For most special events, professional unarmed security is the right solution and creates a better tone for guests.

3. DEFINE WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Tell the security company what matters most before the event begins. Problem areas often include parking lots, perimeter areas, access control, vendor access, alcohol sales, VIP areas, guest flow and closing time.

4. PICK ONE POINT OF CONTACT

Choose one person to be the point



By Lawrence Borgens, President

of contact with security. Security should not take direction from five different people. One person from your organization should give instructions, answer questions and make decisions during the event.

5. PLAN THE END BEFORE IT STARTS

The event is not over when the music stops. Plan for guest departure, parking lot visibility, vendor load-out, and the time when people are tired and attention drops.

These steps are about protecting the celebration. When security is planned well, guests can focus on the food, the music, the people and the purpose of the event while security fades into the background.

Good event security should enhance the guest experience. If the security and safety risks at your event are more than your team can comfortably manage, bring in professional security support before the event begins. What part of your next event needs a plan before the first guest arrives? ▲

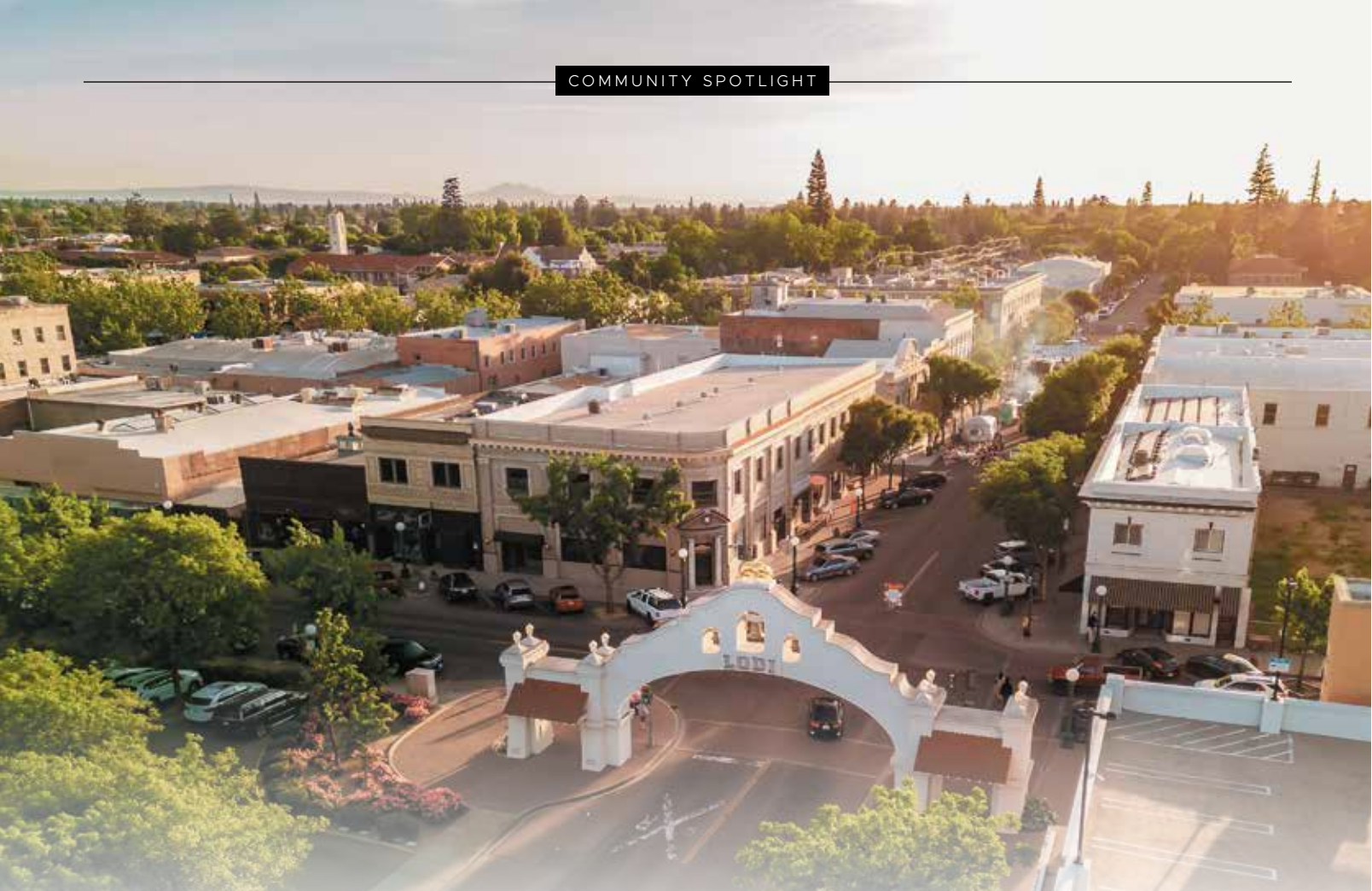
If you are planning an event and think security may be needed, reach out to Delta Protective Services and we can help you decide what level of support makes sense.



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Small Town, Big Heart

LODI WINS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

BY HERLIFE STAFF | PHOTOS COURTESY OF VISIT LODI

There are moments when a community gets recognized not because it tried to be something bigger, louder or flashier, but because it stayed true to itself. For Lodi, being named the national winner of *Parade Magazine* and *Steller's America's* Favorite Small Towns 2026 competition is one of those moments.

After a nationwide contest that included hundreds of communities and hundreds of thousands of votes, Lodi rose to the top, earning the title of America's Favorite Small Town. The recognition celebrates what residents, business owners, growers, makers

and visitors have known for years; Lodi is a place with deep roots, a welcoming spirit and a way of making people feel at home.

"We're beyond thrilled and honestly a little blown away," said Wes Rhea, president and CEO of Visit Lodi. "This win belongs to the people of Lodi, our residents, small business owners, hospitality partners and everyone who voted and rallied their friends, families and coworkers. Lodi showed up with heart, and we're grateful *Parade* and *Steller* are shining a national spotlight on our small town and inviting the country to experience it."

The America's Favorite Small Towns initiative was launched by *Parade* and Steller to celebrate the hidden gems that help define the American experience, with special significance leading into the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and *Parade's* own 85th anniversary in 2026. The competition began with communities across the country, narrowed to finalists, and ultimately Lodi was selected as the national winner. For Lodi, the honor is both a celebration and an opportunity. It places the community in front of a national audience and reinforces the destination's growing reputation as one of California's most approachable and authentic wine country getaways.

Lodi's wine story is central to its identity. Long recognized as one of the world's great Zinfandel regions, Lodi is home to more than 85 wineries and more than 135 grape varieties. Its historic vineyards and old vines tell a story of generations of farming families, agricultural heritage and a wine region that continues to evolve while respecting its roots.

But what makes Lodi stand out is not only the quality of the wine. It is the way people experience it. Lodi's wine scene is welcoming, personal and unpretentious. Visitors can discover award-winning wines, meet the people behind the bottle and enjoy tasting experiences that feel relaxed rather than scripted. "Lodi has always been wine country with a come-as-you-are spirit," he said. "The wines are exceptional, but the experience is approachable. That balance is a huge part of what makes Lodi special."

Beyond the vineyards, Lodi's historic downtown has become one of the community's most-loved gathering places. Walkable, locally owned and full of personality, downtown Lodi offers boutiques, tasting rooms, restaurants, breweries, coffee shops, murals and year-round events. It is the kind of downtown where visitors can park once, wander, linger and feel connected to the pace of the community.

Lodi also delivers the kind of family-friendly and outdoor experiences that make it easy to build a full weekend. Lodi Lake, the Nature Trail, local parks, seasonal events and open-space experiences

give residents and visitors places to slow down, reconnect, and enjoy the outdoors without the crowds or pressure of a more complicated getaway. That combination, wine, downtown, family-friendly experiences, outdoor fun and approachability, is what has helped Lodi build momentum as a destination. It is also what makes this recognition feel so fitting.

"Being named America's Favorite Small Town is more than a title," Wes said. "It validates the work so many people are doing every day: our growers, winemakers, restaurant owners, retailers, hotel teams, event organizers, civic partners and residents. This kind of recognition supports tourism, local business, economic development and community pride."

As the national winner, Lodi will receive extensive editorial coverage across *Parade* and Steller platforms, use of the official America's Favorite Small Town 2026 winner badge and a special *Parade* x Steller activation at Lodi Lake during the community's Fourth of July celebration.

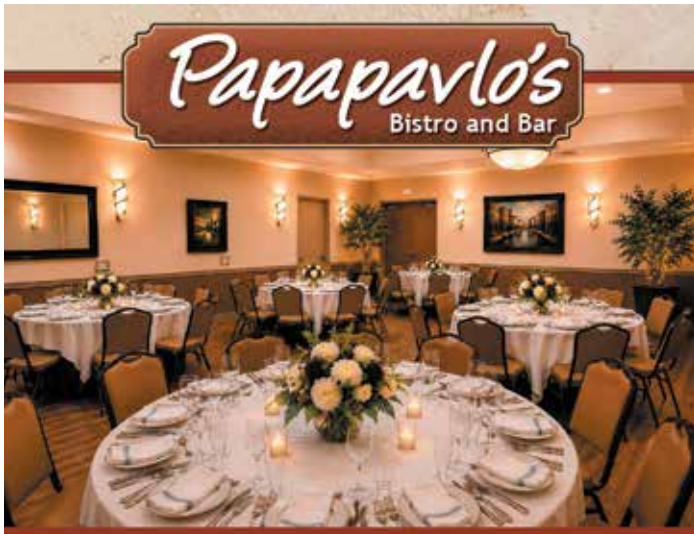
The award also arrives at a time when travelers are increasingly looking for places that feel real, easy to enjoy and worth sharing. Lodi fits that moment. It offers a destination experience that is rich but not intimidating, charming but not manufactured and affordable without sacrificing quality.

For the community, the win is also a reminder of what can happen when people rally around a shared story. During the voting campaign, residents and businesses posted signs, shared links, wore stickers, reminded customers and encouraged friends and family to vote. What began as a contest became a genuine show of hometown pride.

"This recognition belongs to the community," he said. "The best part of the campaign was watching Lodi show up for Lodi. That is the story we want people across the country to see."

Now, as America's Favorite Small Town, Lodi has a new invitation to extend—come see for yourself. Come for the wine. Stroll downtown. Bring the family. Get outside. Meet the people. Stay the weekend. And discover why Lodi is not just nationally recognized but locally loved. ♦





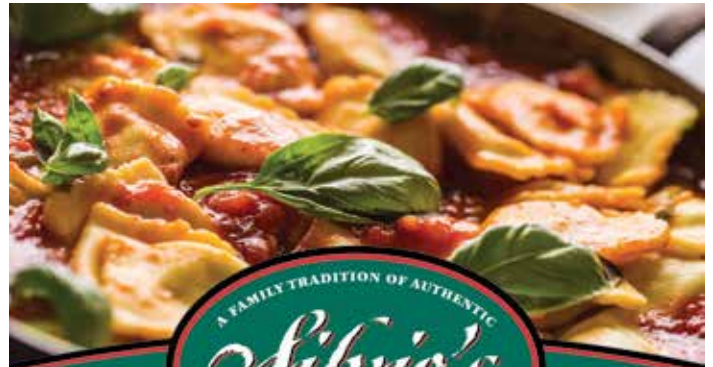
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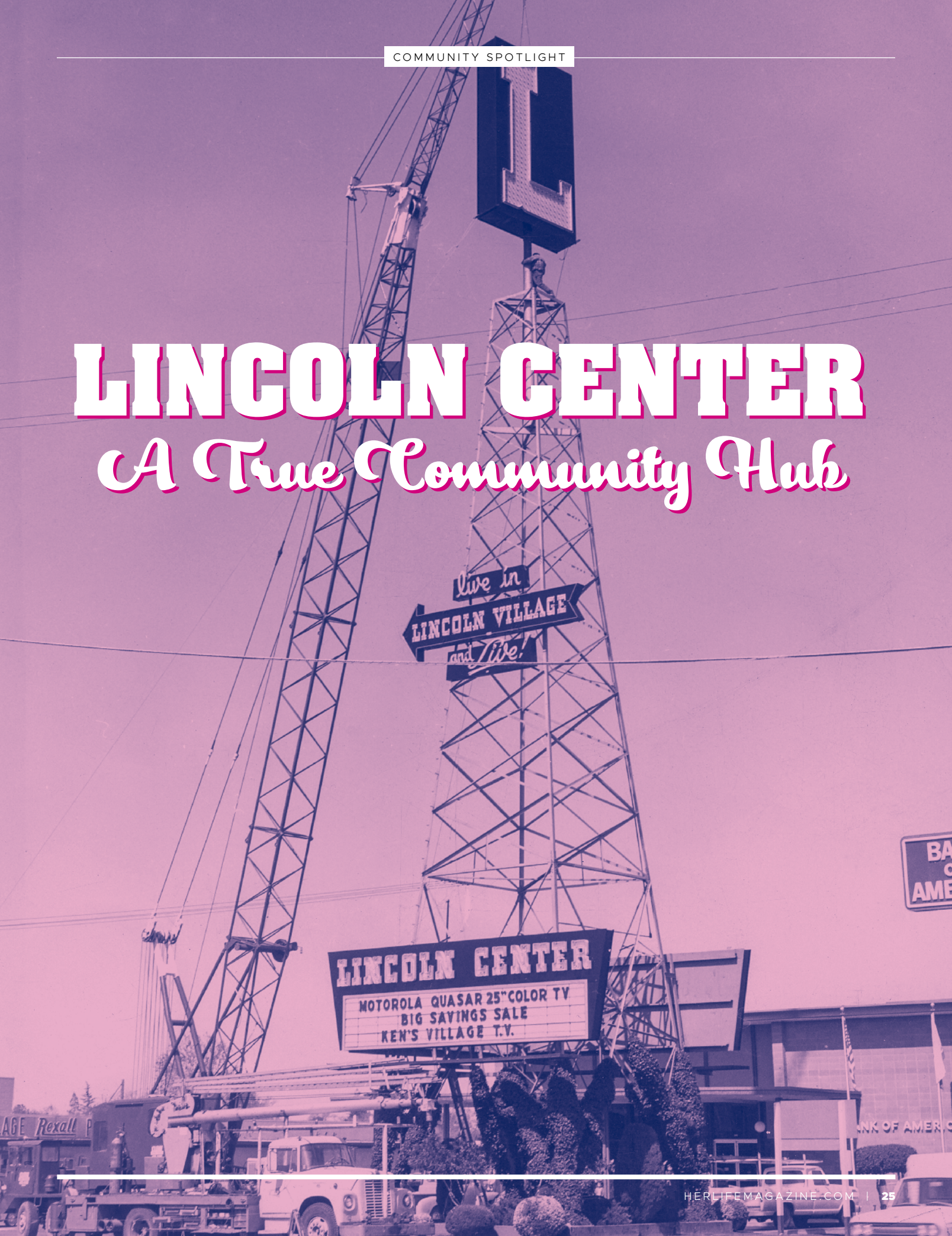
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LINCOLN CENTER

A True Community Hub





BY JO ANN KIRBY AND ISABELLE MELLO

Stockton's Lincoln Center is celebrating 75 years as a community cornerstone; it's where people gather to dine, shop, visit their dentist, get a haircut and celebrate the holidays. It's a one-stop shopping center that has successfully withstood the test of time by embracing a mix of national chains and independent small business owners.

"Over the years, there have been moments when our team took chances, moments that helped shape who we are today," said Phil Johnson, president and CEO of Sims-Grupe Management, which manages Lincoln Center and other industrial and commercial properties. "One that stands out is bringing the first Starbucks and Noah's Bagels to San Joaquin County right here to Lincoln Center." Not everyone was convinced that it would be a fit. "But we believed in the idea that Lincoln Center should evolve, should introduce new experiences and should always stay just a step ahead," he continued.

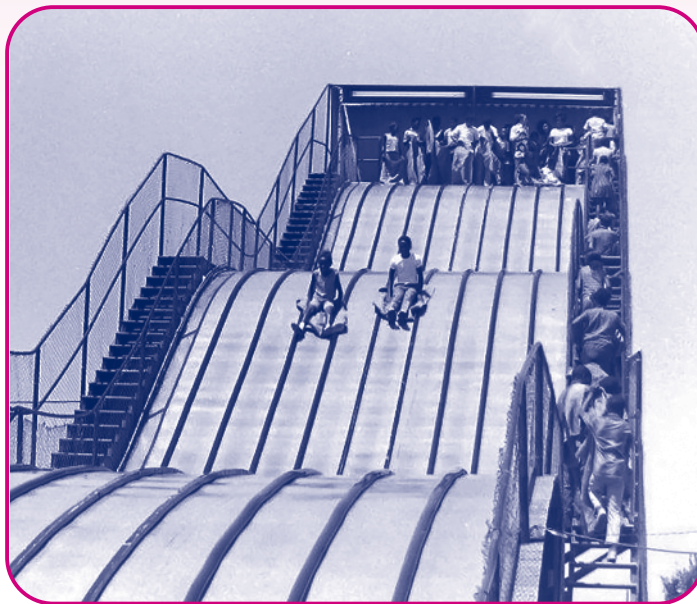
A big part of Lincoln Center, Phil said, are the entrepreneurs who bet on Stockton and are willing to invest in the community.

They have been stalwart contributors since the start.

Natalia Dentoni, owner of Best Wishes, said her business benefits from being in Lincoln Center. She cited steady foot traffic and said people are drawn to the well-kept spaces. "Both merchants and customers appreciate the amazing security the center has always provided. Lincoln Center has constantly found differ-

ent ways to not only take care of its merchants but provide a variety of boutiques and niche shops to its shoppers that they would not find in places like regular strip malls. It is a huge accomplishment for the community, that the center is celebrating 75 years," she said.

Lincoln Center's story began when founders Roy Sims and Greenlaw Grupe established Sims-Grupe Management and began developing the planned community of Lincoln Village on 1,600 acres owned by the Holt family. Once the company began purchasing land in stages, homes were built and Lincoln Village



began to take shape. These new homeowners would need a shopping center and in 1951, ground was broken for Lincoln Center on the north side of Benjamin Holt Drive. It opened in November 1951

with 12 stores including Village Barber, which remains today albeit under different ownership.

"It's the best shopping center around, bar none," said Bobby L. Page Sr., who has owned Village Barber since 2005. "It's a great location, clean, secure and truly the best." Bobby said the management fosters a sense of community and he's grateful they allow him to host an annual celebration for veterans and first responders. This year's celebration will be the 20th at the center and it's scheduled for November 7. "I so much appreciate working here and owning a business among all the other unique businesses," he added.

As the years passed, Lincoln Center grew, encompassing its original north side and expanding the south side. Today it is home to 90 businesses. It includes a mix of medical and professional services, specialty stores, restaurants, fitness, health and beauty outlets, gift shops, clothing boutiques and jewelry stores.

It's a place where people come to celebrate the special occasions in their life, whether it's a graduation lunch at a favorite restaurant, a birthday, anniversary or a big promotion. You'll see seniors meeting for their morning coffee and neighbors taking a morning stroll. Even the holidays at Lincoln Center are extra special when the Easter Bunny and Santa make an appearance. And there's always something fun on the Lincoln Center calendar such as Summerfest, which takes place August 21 and features live mu-



sic, a giant slide and more. The event gives attendees the opportunity to support the Child Abuse Prevention Council by participating in their annual Duck Derby with the \$5 purchase of a rubber duck.

"I visit Lincoln Center at least a few times a week for errands and social get-togethers with my family and or friends,"

Jenna Mello, a Stockton resident, said. "Podesto's is definitely one of my most frequent stops in Lincoln Center. They have a great selection of meats and cheeses and my family loves their delicious deli sandwiches." Jenna, who with her husband are parents of a daughter in high school and a daughter in college, said Market Tavern, La Mesa and Papapavlo's are their definite go-to spots for a night out.

Indeed, there are nearly 30 places to dine in Lincoln Center, and Prime Table is poised for expansion. "That's what Lincoln Center is all about," Phil said. "It grows with you. It becomes part of your story and then part of the next generation's story too."

Lincoln Center has never just been about shopping or dining, he continued. "From the very beginning in 1951, it was built to serve as a gathering place, a true community hub."

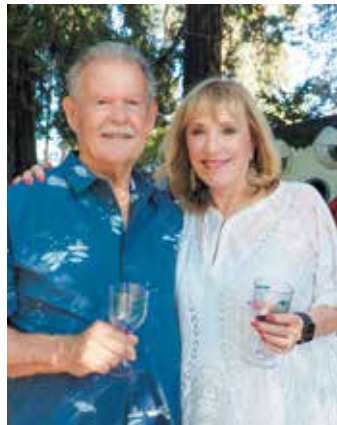
To celebrate its 75th anniversary, Lincoln Center is hosting a gala to raise funds for the San Joaquin Historical Society's Pioneer Village. To inquire about sponsorship and ticket information, contact Katie Drebert at katie@lincolncentershops.com. ♦



WINE, BEER AND FUN AT PIXIE WOODS

Pixie Woods, Stockton's amusement park, held its annual wine and beer tasting event on June 19, 2026, at the park. Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres, entertainment, a silent auction and the chance to sample wine from Napa, Sonoma Valley, the Carneros region and Lodi wine country. Local breweries served up beer as well. The fundraiser helps support improvements and new features at Pixie Woods. ♦

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HELEN RIPKEN





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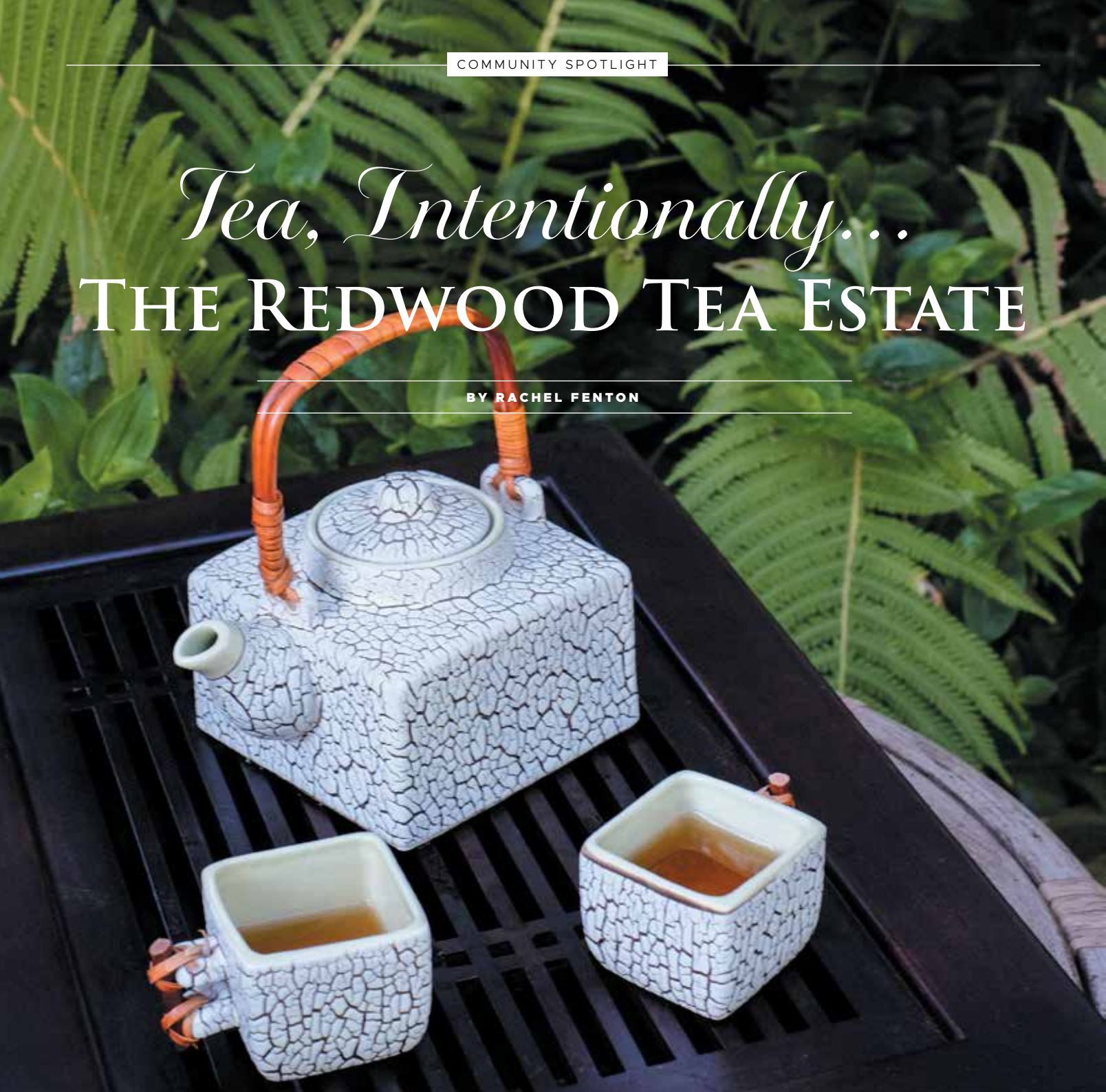
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Tea, Intentionally... THE REDWOOD TEA ESTATE

BY RACHEL FENTON



In a world where automation and efficiency dictate our decisions, it can be hard to slow down or take time for ourselves. The pace of modern life leaves little time for leisure. But there are some who are re-examining their priorities, instead choosing quality over quantity and intentionality over ease. The statistics on growing interest in organic and local sourcing shows this is not a niche desire; all of us are looking for a way to create havens of peace in the midst of the chaos of life. Patrick Sunbury's passion is creating these havens of peace and sharing them with those around him through a beverage that spans centuries and cultures: tea.

Patrick, the co-founder of the Redwood Tea Estate, has been a life-long lover of both tea and the outdoors. "I always had a love of plants," Patrick said. "I always loved being outside and being in nature."

As a fifth-generation Californian, he especially loved visiting his grandparents' farm in the Central Valley. A landscape architect with degrees from both UC Berkeley and Harvard University, Patrick had built a successful career designing masterplan communities and other projects with similar goals, creating outdoor spaces where people could flourish. However, the long hours in front of screens triggered a neurological disease, trigeminal neuralgia, which causes bouts of intense pain that radiate throughout the face. He began shifting his work off of the screen to manage his chronic pain condition, and his father offered him use of the free half-acre on their family land if he wanted it. Slowly, an idea began to bud – what about a tea farm? And from that bud, the Redwood Tea Estate bloomed.

Patrick soon found himself a pioneer through uncharted territory. "There's no guidance on which cultivars to plant, how to arrange them," he said. "There's no guidelines on how things should be." There are very few tea farms in the United States and only a few remaining nurseries in the nation that sell tea plants. "We mostly have heirloom cultivars," Patrick said. "A lot of the cultivars we have here came in the 19th century or the early 20th century." After trial and error, he found a cultivar that took to California's climate, and from there the tea farm grew along with its ecosystem, lovingly and carefully crafted by Patrick's research and expertise. The plants were closely spaced to inhibit weed growth, just wide enough to walk through. Na-

tive valley oak trees and yarrow provided shade and mulch, and attracted beneficial birds and insects. And each time the leaves are ready for harvest, called a flush, they are picked by hand and prepared for processing.

A single plant produces the teas we know, black, green, oolong, and white; the difference is in how the leaf is processed. "Tea has very elaborate processing techniques," Patrick said, and most of the preparation methods available to him are from the same time period as the cultivars. Some leaves he simply dries to create white tea that lets that season's uniqueness shine. Some he pan-fires, tumbles, rolls, oxidizes or roasts, each method tailored to bring out different notes in the tea itself. Members of the Redwood Tea Estate's tea club get quarterly shipments of their premium tea, each highlighting that season's distinctive flavors and

notes. The entire process is the definition of artisanal, the techniques rustic and rarely used or discarded in the name of efficiency. But the tea he creates speaks for itself, as luxurious as silk and now as accessible as other local organic produce.

Why should our standards for tea be any different than our meat, produce or even our coffee and wine? Most tea available to us in the United States is shipped from across the world, low-grade and bagged and shelved for months, if not years, before it reaches our kettles. There is little to no information on the growing process of the powdered leaves within their sachets, no indication of what pesticides might have been used in the growing process, or the quality of the tea leaves themselves.

In contrast, the tea produced at Redwood Tea Estate is carefully farmed and prepared through artisanal methods, no pesticides, herbicides or fungicides ever used. The leaves can be reused up to three times, often making the price per cup equal to or even less expensive than the low-grade offerings in our stores. And the estate's slow, intentional approach to tea cultivation invites us to examine how we cultivate our own lives. Do we want to rush from one thing to the next, treating food as fuel and disregarding its sources? Or do we want to live with intentionality, approaching food as connection to the land that nourishes us, and demanding products that are worth their cost, not just for our wallets, but also for our health? ♦

To learn more, visit redwoodteaestate.com.



HAGGIN À LA CARTE

Haggin à la Carte took place June 20, 2026, and offered a rare opportunity to experience spectacular original illustrations by Tony DeZuniga (1932–2012), a pioneering Filipino comic artist and legendary illustrator. As the first Filipino comic book artist published by American companies, DeZuniga paved the way for generations of artists. Renowned for his groundbreaking work with DC Comics, he co-created iconic characters such as Jonah Hex and Black Orchid. Guests enjoyed an unforgettable evening at the intersection of exceptional cuisine, lively entertainment and legendary art. ♦

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HELEN RIPKEN



FARMERS MARKETS: FROM FARM TO TABLE

BY PATTY COOK

As summer arrives, I find myself drawn to several local farmers' markets. The bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables changes every week as the growing season moves into full swing. Vendors at the stalls talk about the weather, their produce and whether they use pesticides or other chemicals. But what exactly do words like organic, natural and local mean?

“Organic” is used in a generic sense, with farmers explaining, “We don’t use any pesticides or sprays.” If you see or hear the phrase “certified organic,” it means the farmer meets specific criteria that are set by the National Organic Program. “Certified naturally grown” means the farmer meets a standard that was created specifically for farmers who sell only directly to local customers. If livestock or poultry are described as “grass fed” or “pastured,” it means they are raised for some part of their lives on pasture, and may have been fed supplemental grains.

One phrase to beware of is “locally grown.” This might refer to food grown on a small family farm, a more conventional large farm, or a corporate farm. If you feel it’s important to buy direct from small farms, the claim of “locally grown” may not mean what you think.

But what is the advantage of supporting smaller, local farms? Is there any real benefit to the time and effort involved in finding organic foods?

Census data tells us that the number of farms in the United States has declined in the last 50 years, from just more than 4 million to 2 million. But in that same period of time, our population grew by about 140 million people, which means that the size of farms has increased.

Production of food has had to move to large scale operations, with food processing keeping pace with that growth. Larger farms specialize in growing a single crop, using more chemicals to ensure bigger harvests. Shipping requires harvesting plants just before they ripen in order to reduce spoilage. And mass production, shipping and processing mean that more resources are dedicated to food handling, packaging and distribution.

From a nutritional standpoint, mass-produced food is measurably lower in micronutrients than food grown in a more sustainable environment. Whether it is loss of biodiversity or declining soil quality, high-yield produce is lower in iron, potassium, calcium, zinc and selenium. Large-scale processing and preparation also mean an increased risk of things that we don’t want in our food. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention tracks the number of illnesses caused by foodborne disease such as norovirus, salmonella, E. coli and staphylococcus aureus. CDC estimates based on 2018 data project that each



year these and other pathogens cause more than 48 million illnesses, 128,000 hospital visits and 3,000 deaths.

In contrast, sustainable farming practices tend to minimize pesticide use and increase composting, which promotes good soil structure. Smaller local farms reduce the need for packaging, refrigeration and shipping. Organically grown plants are higher in antioxidants and vitamin C. Meats, dairy products and eggs from pastured animals have a higher content of omega-3, vitamins A and E, and a better ratio of good (HDL) versus bad (LDL) cholesterol.

Small-scale farmers must also cope with some diseases are resistant to

treatment. Goats and sheep raised for cheese and meat are prone to certain parasites that have become resistant to chemical dewormers. Farmers are learning to cope by changing the crops that the animals browse and using different fertilizers to discourage growth of worms.

If these health benefits inspire you to buy directly from a smaller farm, one simple way is to get involved in a CSA program. Community Supported Agriculture programs are available locally, including participation with grocery store chains. Consumers sign up for a “share” of a farm’s harvest by paying an up-front fee; weekly bags or boxes of produce are distributed, either by delivery or at a central pickup location. Some CSAs offer more variety than others, with choices including fruit, jams, honey, meats, eggs and cheese. This way the farmers can count on a consistent cash flow and consumers enjoy food harvested at the peak of ripeness.

One drawback to CSAs is that you are a partner in risk with the farmer, who is at the mercy of the weather. Storms, rain, hail, heat and drought may make your dreams of a bountiful harvest wither along with the crops. If you want to learn more about local farms and CSAs, check with your grocer or take time to talk with the farmers at your local markets and farm stands.

Former Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack has said, “Local and regional food systems are about opportunity.” The folks who rise before dawn to harvest their crops for market just might give you the opportunity of a lifetime. ♦

SOURCES: brainyquote.com, cdc.gov, foodroutes.org and localharvest.org.



Deannedra Cicolani

BY JO ANN KIRBY

Deannedra “Dee” Cicolani, owner of The Olive Board, was born and raised in Lodi, where she still lives. Dee, the mother of a teenage daughter, is a compassionate advocate for developmentally disabled individuals and has worked in human services for over ten years supporting individuals through advocacy, life skills programs, community involvement, employment services and person-centered support. She’s also incredibly creative, which led her to launch The Olive Board, a mobile charcuterie business. She creates experiences for people through delicious food and believes in making people feel welcomed, celebrated and valued.

Q. What do you love most about your community?

A. How supportive and connected people are. There is such a strong sense of community here, especially among small business owners and families. I love being able to create experiences that bring people together through meaningful connection and make celebrations feel special.

Q. Tell us about your day job!

A. I am a program manager for Person Centered Services, and one of the special projects I work on and is special to my heart is a group called The Advocates. They're an incredible group of paid performers who sing and dance within our local community, and getting to watch their confidence grow and see how much joy they bring to others has been one of the most rewarding parts of my career. This work has shaped me so much as a person. It taught me the importance of inclusion, advocacy and creating opportunities for people to feel seen, valued, heard and celebrated.

Q. Tell us about your business and how it got started?

A. My business is rooted from my Italian heritage, a love of hosting and hospitality, creating memorable experiences and creating delicious food for those that I care about. It began as a creative outlet and my having a naturally "snacky" personality, and I wanted to share my love for food styling and charcuterie with others, creating experiences that naturally feel elevated but, more importantly, fresh, beautiful and stress-free. I am also expanding into dessert and specialty food cart experiences. With The Olive Board's growth, I would love to continue to provide employment services for those I currently serve through teaching, skill development and helping them achieve their dreams through inclusion and community.

Q. What kind of events have you served at?

A. Birthdays, baby showers, bridal showers, community gatherings and private events. The Olive Board specializes in creating setups that feel customized and personal to each client. My goal is to ensure each client has a stress-free experience from start to finish. No worrying about event planning, food shopping, kitchen prep, refilling dishes or missing out on those special moments with your guests. I take that on for you.

Q. What is the most rewarding part of your new business?

A. Seeing people genuinely enjoy the experience and the sense of joy from a unique and interactive catering experience. Food has a way of bringing people together; however, from experience, something that I have noticed is that the host is always missing out on those special moments with their guests, because those moments, you don't get them back. Also, it is incredibly fulfilling



to build something of your own from the ground up.

Q. What has been the most challenging?

A. One of the biggest challenges has definitely been visibility and wearing so many hats at once. As a new business owner, so much of our growth relies on social media presence, content creation, networking and word of mouth. You're constantly balancing the creative side with marketing,

customer service, planning events and behind-the-scenes work that people don't always see. Building a business means showing up consistently while also trying to stay present for the creative work itself. It's challenging at times, but it's also pushed me to grow in ways I never expected.

Q. What brings you the most joy?

A. You can say, "Food is my love language." But creating beautiful experiences for others and seeing people come together over food and celebration while creating memories that last a lifetime is truly rewarding.

Q. If you have free time, how do you most like to spend it?

A. When I have free time, you'll find me down some rabbit hole of food excursions, ha ha. I also love reading and learning, going to the gym, trying new restaurants and coffee shops, spending time at the beach and working on new ideas for my business.

Q. What are your top three goals?

A. To continue growing my business throughout the Central Valley and surrounding areas; to create a recognizable brand that people trust and remember; to inspire other women to pursue their passions and build businesses they are proud of.

Q. What hobbies do you enjoy?

A. I love cooking and food styling, fashion and beauty, being outdoors and spending time with my daughter.

Q. What is the title/author of the last book you've read?

A. The last book I read was *Atomic Habits* by James Clear. I enjoy books about growth, self-development and becoming the best you.

Q. What shows have you seen that you would recommend?

A. I loved the series *The Bear* and *Chef's Table* because they combine creativity and passion through food and experience.

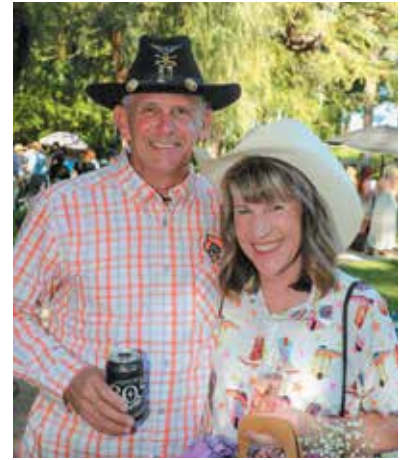
Q. Favorite food/dessert?

A. My favorite foods are of course, charcuterie and Italian food of all kinds. I also love a good focaccia or sourdough bread! For desserts, definitely cannoli, cheesecake and tiramisu! ♦

JUNIOR LEAGUE CELEBRATES CENTENNIAL

Junior League San Joaquin County, which is celebrating 100 years, hosted its first Boots and Bubbly fundraiser featuring a delicious dinner, line dancing, raffles and live music by Mama Foxy and the Whiskey Gypsy Rebels. The event was held June 13, 2026, at Capecchio Ovest, a private estate. ♦

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HELEN RIPKEN



LET THE MUSIC MOVE YOU

Paying Tribute Pays Off

BY TIM DALY

It could simply be a matter of dollars and cents; \$400 to see a rock legend or \$40 for the tribute band. It might be the location; Earth Wind and Fire AND Kool and the Gang probably aren't coming to San Joaquin County but their tribute act did. You might just want a trip down memory lane, listening to the music that impacted you in high school, college or early in your marriage.

Whatever the reason, numerous internet music sites seem to agree that tribute bands have never been more popular than they are now, with some of those acts actually outdrawing the original artist when they appear live.

Animals, based in Texas, recently boasted two other attributes that come in handy when they performed Maroon 5 hits at Jessie's Grove in Lodi. Their musicianship was excellent and their lead singer could be a double, both in appearance and in vocal skill, to the actual famous lead singer Adam Levine.

"David's an amazing musician, singer and frontman. So, I don't want to diminish any of that talent. But it's nice that he adds that additional factor as well." That's Animals keyboard player and co-band leader Mario Medina talking about singer David Gates. "David's too modest to say this, but I see how women react to him and his voice. He's got his own sound, but he also has the range of someone like Adam Levine. It's a natural fit."

Both women and men reacted instantly to Animals, named for the band's 10th top 10 single that reached #3 on Billboard Hot 100. The tight and accurate arrangements had fans, young and old, jumping in unison and singing along with each well-known hit. That performance was even more notable considering the group performed the night before in Ohio and experienced travel delays of five hours getting to Lodi. Mario, David and the others were still on stage at 6:30 p.m. doing a soundcheck for a show starting at 7:00 p.m.

Tribute bands don't just visit our area. Stockton and San Joaquin County have a rich history of producing tribute acts that play in local bars, restaurants, fairs and fundraisers. Music fans might remember being thoroughly entertained by the Abba tribute group Waterloo. These days, it's Long Time, a Boston tribute band, now impressing those fans with soaring guitars and keyboards that come amazingly close to the sound perfected by Boston genius Tom Scholz in the mid and late '70s.

The idea for Long Time, a song title from their debut album, sprang up at a Stockton Civic Theatre rehearsal for The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas. That's where a drummer and guitar player agreed a Boston tribute band was worth exploring. Tim Boore was that guitar player and still leads the group today, 15 years later.

"I was a junior in high school in 1976, when the first Boston



SAVE THE DATE
UPCOMING LONG TIME PERFORMANCE
 September 4, Swabbies on the River, Sacramento

album came out and no one had ever heard a guitar like that," said Boore. "Our first practice I think we had 12 players with backup singers, three guitar players, a keyboard player; and as time went by we went through five bass players, two drummers and probably six or seven other guitar players, to come up with the lineup we have today."

There are agreements that tribute bands pay attention to before taking the stage. They can't do anything with their name, logo or advertising that could lead fans to think they're seeing the real thing. Boore said he heard from the management of Boston that their logo was a little too close to the original, so it was changed. Also, tribute bands don't pay the original groups for the right to play the music. It's the venues that pay licensing fees to performer rights organizations such as ASCAP.

After taking a break to refresh their batteries, Long Time has recently begun performing live again. As for Animals, they're performing soon all around the country in Massachusetts, Louisiana and Oregon, but not in Boston, New Orleans and Portland. Appropriately, for tribute bands, they'll be in places like Acton, Bossier City and Independence, hoping their travel arrangements get them there in time for a proper soundcheck. ♦



I am always looking for new and exciting gigs to showcase musicians in our community who deserve recognition. Stay tuned!
 Feel free to reach out: tim@dalyvideoservices.com.

LEMON PEACH FIZZ

RECIPE & PHOTO PROVIDED BY BELLYFULL.NET



INGREDIENTS

1 14-ounce container lemon sorbet
 2 12-ounce bottles peach soda
 4 teaspoons finely chopped fresh mint
 2 tablespoons agave nectar
 lemon zest and mint leaves, for garnish
 10-ounce stemless champagne glasses

DIRECTIONS

Using a tablespoon-size cookie scoop, scoop 2 balls of the lemon sorbet into each glass; sprinkle with 1 teaspoon of the chopped mint, then drizzle 1/2 tablespoon of the agave, followed by 2 more scoops of the sorbet. Pour 6 ounces of the peach soda over the top. Garnish with some lemon zest and a mint leaf. Serve and enjoy! ♦

TIPS

1: For an alcoholic version, simply add 1.5 ounces of vodka to each glass.

2: Honey may be substituted for the agave.

3: To cut back on calories, use a sparkling peach fruit juice such as Fresca®.

Bar None

A Warehouse-Turned-Entertainment
Space With Serious Personality

BY KATHLEEN JENNISON
PHOTOS BY KEVIN RICHTIK, CAROLINE PHOTOGRAPHY



When Kyle and Tracy May decided to transform their RV and warehouse space, they were not looking for a polite little bonus room. They wanted the works.

A place to watch the game. A place to host friends. A place to display years of sports memorabilia. A place to swing a golf club without leaving home. A place with a kitchen, a bar, a lounge, and even guest accommodations. In other words, they wanted a lot. And somehow, Bar None delivers it all.

Designed by KTJ Design Co., this once-unfinished structure is now a full-fledged entertainment space with color, comfort, history and just the right amount of swagger.

A Raw Space with Big Ambitions

Before the transformation, the space was exactly what you would expect from an RV and warehouse structure: concrete floors, framed walls, an unfinished ceiling and plenty of possibility. Jenco Companies polished the concrete floors, giving the room a durable foundation with a relaxed, industrial edge.

From there, the design challenge was clear. The space needed to feel fun, personal and layered, but not chaotic. It had to function like a sports lounge, a bar, a golf simulator, a family room and a guest retreat

without feeling like five rooms fighting for attention. No pressure.

The Sign That Started It All

The soul of Bar None came from one very meaningful piece: Kyle's vintage Orlie's Place sign. The sign belonged to his grandfather's and father's bar, a well-known Stockton spot that has been closed for many years. It was more than memorabilia. It was family history.

Rather than tucking the sign into the room as an afterthought, KTJ Design Co. used it as the starting point for the entire design. Its bold red, blue, gold and cream tones inspired the color palette, giving the space its playful energy and nostalgic warmth.

Deep blue walls and ceiling wrap the room in drama, while the rich red shelving wall brings instant character. Warm wood beams, camel leather seating, brass accents and textured fabrics keep the bold palette grounded and inviting.

Memorabilia with Manners

Kyle and Tracy had an extensive collection of sports memorabilia, family keepsakes, vintage pieces and personal treasures. The goal was to celebrate it all without letting the room turn into a sports bar storage unit.



The solution was balance. Built-in arched shelving gives smaller objects a proper stage. Framed jerseys, golf pieces, signage and artwork are placed throughout the room with intention. Nothing feels random, but nothing feels too precious either. The space still has that easy, come-on-in-and-grab-a-seat feeling.

It is collected, not cluttered. Personal, not precious. A little nostalgic, a little cheeky and very much theirs.

Designed for Real Entertaining

Bar None was designed around the way the Mays actually live and entertain. The lounge area invites guests to settle in for game day. The kitchen and bar make hosting easy, with a central island, open shelving, refrigeration and plenty of room for serving drinks and snacks. Nearby, the golf simulator brings the fun factor up several notches.

This is a space made for movement. Someone can be mixing drinks at the bar while others are watching a game, playing golf or sinking into the sofa. It works because each zone has its own purpose but the whole room still feels connected.

That kind of ease does not happen by accident. KTJ Design Co. provided full-service design, including concept development, space

planning, finish selections, furnishings, styling, procurement, installation and project management. Every layer had to work, from the flow of the room to the final styled shelf.

A Space with a Story

The finished Bar None space is bold, warm, personal and full of life. It honors Kyle's family history through the Orle's Place sign, celebrates the Mays' love of sports and entertaining, and turns a once-raw structure into a place people naturally want to gather.

It's not just a game room. Not just a bar. Not just a lounge. It is a family story with really good lighting, comfortable seating, a golf simulator and a very strong hosting game.

Bar None is a place to cheer, relax, gather, play, stay awhile and make new memories. And honestly? The name says it best. ♦



Kathleen Jennison is the owner and principal designer of KTJ Design Co., a full-service interior design firm specializing in helping clients create homes that support life's next chapter.

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STOCKTON SYMPHONY

PETER JAFFE | MUSIC DIRECTOR

100TH

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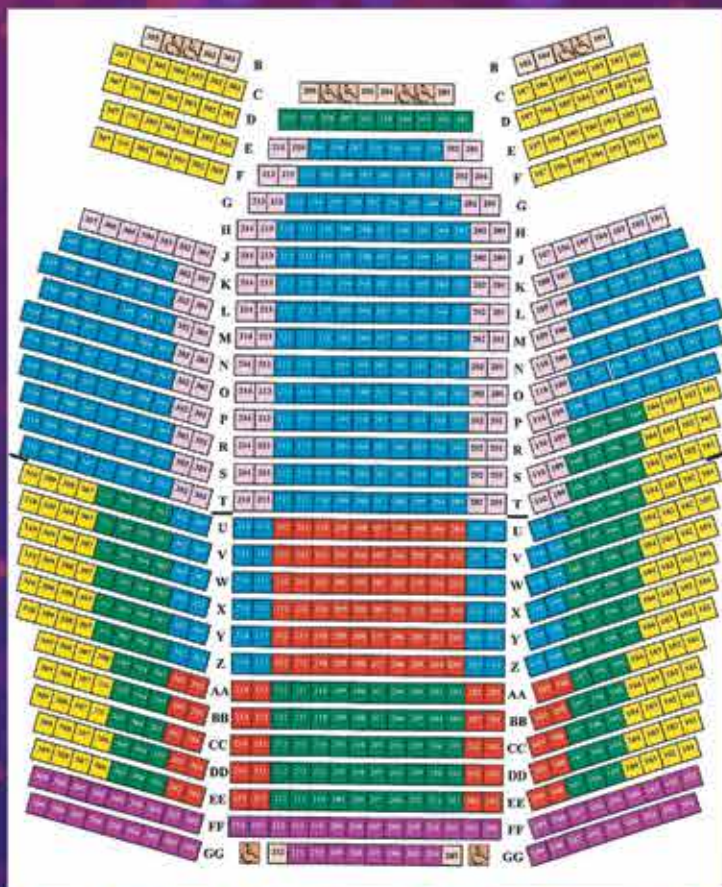
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Ticket levels are color-coded by seating area.



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LEVEL 6	\$17	\$50	\$70

SCAN TO VIEW FULL SEATING
MAP & CHOOSE YOUR SEATS!



Schedule

HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR: SILENT MOVIE NOSFERATU

2:30PM, Sunday, October 18, 2026

Kermit Poling, guest conductor and composer

A classic Halloween night at the movies – except the soundtrack is live, in the room, and absolutely gripping. Composer and guest conductor Kermit Poling leads the orchestra in a newly imagined full-length score for the silent-film masterpiece Nosferatu.

VIVA ITALIA!

2:30PM, Sunday, November 8, 2026

Peter Jaffe, music director and conductor, Bianca Orsi, soprano, Roberto Perlas Gomez, baritone

Italy takes center stage in a richly colored program of opera, romance, and orchestral spectacle. Hear dramatic works by Verdi, a graceful waltz by Stockton's own Joan Cortopassi, and beloved favorites by Puccini, Rossini, Donizetti, and Ponchielli.

HOLIDAY POPS: CELEBRATE THE SEASON

6:00PM, Saturday, December 5, 2026

2:30PM, Sunday, December 6, 2026

Peter Jaffe, music director and conductor, Philo Ebid, vocalist Stockton Youth Chorus, children singers

A festive, feel-good celebration filled with holiday warmth, bright brass, cozy classics, sing-along fun, and the musical sparkle that makes December shine. Special guest artist Filo Ebid, University of the Pacific alumnus and Top 12 American Idol finalist.

IT'S ABOUT TIME

6:00PM, Thursday, January 28, 2027

Peter Jaffe, music director and conductor

Drawn from the Stockton Symphony's Stepping Out Educational Concerts, this program is reimagined as a public performance for all ages. Engaging, accessible, and full of energy, it offers a spirited concert experience that appeals to adults and younger listeners alike.

ENDLESS LOVE

2:30PM, Sunday, February 7, 2027

Peter Jaffe, music director and conductor, Shayna Steele, vocalist, Chester Gregory, vocalist

Grab your sweetheart and fall in love all over again with timeless melodies. Superstar vocalists Chester Gregory and Shayna Steele join the Stockton Symphony for an unforgettable evening of classic love songs. Featuring beloved romantic solos and duets.

GLOBAL GETAWAYS

2:30PM, Sunday, March 14, 2027

Peter Jaffe, music director and conductor, Brian Bùi, òan tranh

Come Fly with Us: A Musical Journey Around the World – Take a musical trip around the world with sparkling classical discoveries, folkloric color, and vibrant contemporary voices reflecting the cultures of our community. The journey includes music by Saint-Georges and Ginastera, Philippine song arrangements, and Brian Bùi's Vietnamese Folk Medley.

BEETHOVEN: SYMPHONY NO. 9

6:00PM, Saturday, April 3, 2027

Peter Jaffe, music director and conductor, Bianca Orsi, soprano, Monica Danilov, mezzo-soprano, Ashley Faatoalia, tenor, Cedric Berry, bass-baritone

Combined Choruses: Stockton Chorus, University of the Pacific, and Delta College

A crowning statement for the Centennial Season, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 stands among the most powerful and uplifting works ever written. Performed with four acclaimed vocal soloists and combined choruses, it brings a stirring message of unity and hope.

MOTHER'S DAY POPS: THOSE WERE THE DAYS

2:30PM, Sunday, May 9, 2027

Peter Jaffe, music director and conductor

A Centennial finale that plays like a greatest-hits time capsule: the top songs and unforgettable tunes that shaped the last 100 years, cherry-picked for maximum nostalgia, joy, and hum-along appeal.

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Stockton Unified Students Hit the Right Note at Carnegie Hall



KIDS SHINING BRIGHTLY



BY MELINDA MEZA | PHOTOS BY STOCKTON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The applause echoed through one of the world's most prestigious concert venues as more than 65 talented musicians from Franklin High School's Concert Band took the stage at Carnegie Hall in New York City, representing Stockton Unified School District with pride, passion and excellence.

For these student musicians, the performance was far more than a concert; it was the culmination of years of dedication, perseverance and countless hours of practice. Standing on the same stage that has welcomed some of the greatest musicians in history, students realized that their dreams were not only possible but within reach.

"I dreamt about something big, but I didn't know I was allowed to dream this big," said Franklin High School student Ava Marquez. "This is like a dream, a pretty vivid one. I still can't believe that I'm here."

The Carnegie Hall performance showcased the remarkable talent being cultivated within Stockton Unified School District and highlighted the district's continued commitment to providing students with world-class opportunities in the arts.

"This group represents the very best of what can happen when students believe in themselves," said Cindy Wildman, Stockton Unified's director of visual and performing arts. "Look out, world—Stockton has arrived. The exciting thing about this group is helping students realize they can reach the next level."

The unforgettable experience extended well beyond the concert stage. During their visit to New York City, students participated in a professional master class, attended a Broadway performance

and explored iconic landmarks, including the Empire State Building. These experiences broadened their understanding of music, culture and the endless possibilities available through education.

For Franklin High School band director Jacqueline Hairston, watching her students perform on such a renowned stage was the reward for years of preparation. "It was incredible to watch our students embrace the responsibility of preparing for this performance," Jacqueline said. "They worked tirelessly to become even better, not only for themselves but to make their families, their school and the Stockton community proud."

The trip was made possible through an arts grant, demonstrating the impact that investment in arts education can have on students' lives. Opportunities like these inspire young musicians to pursue their passions while building confidence, discipline, teamwork and leadership skills that will serve them well beyond the classroom.

Superintendent Dr. Michelle Rodriguez said the Carnegie Hall performance reflects Stockton Unified's commitment to helping every student discover and develop their unique talents. "We focus on students' passions, interests and talents, and this is yet another example showing our students that through hard work and dedication, they can achieve anything they set their minds to," she said.

As the final notes faded beneath the legendary chandeliers of Carnegie Hall, Franklin High School's student musicians left more than memories behind. They left a lasting impression that proved excellence has no boundaries and that Stockton Unified students are ready to shine on the world's biggest stages. ♦



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Dolly

A HAPPINESS MAGNET

BY HERLIFE STAFF



Q: What is your name?

A: My name is Dolly.

Q: How would you describe your personality?

A: My personality is very sweet, but I can also be a little shy too. Unlike my other goat friends, I'm not pushy; I wait for my turn for a treat or a pet.

Q: What is your favorite thing to do in your free time?

A: I love to climb up the log structure in my pen. I'm one of the smaller goats in my herd, so I love to climb on things and pretend I'm the tallest of all my friends.

Q: Do you have a guilty pleasure?

A: Yes, I do! Sometimes I sneak out of the pen with my best friend Dixie to explore the barn or grab some extra hay.

Q: What was your naughtiest deed you did as a kid?

A: When I was a kid, I thought the best way to eat hay was from inside the hay feeder. But one day I misjudged my jump and ended up breaking my front leg. Thankfully the vet and my farmer got me a nice sturdy cast and my leg healed completely! But now I know not to jump into any feeders.

Q: What is your biggest obsession right now?

A: I love having my neck and cheek rubbed by my farmers and visitors.

Q: What is your favorite, most wonderful treat?

A: That is a hard question, but I would have to go with animal cookies. They really are the best treat ever!

Q: What is your favorite way to relax?

A: My favorite way to relax is doing Goat Yoga or Paint with Goats with all the visitors at the farm. I like doing those things because I get tons of snuggles and pets from everyone who visits me. When people snuggle and pet me, they always smile, which makes me very happy.

Q: What would you like for everyone to know about you?

A: I am a Mini-Nubian goat, which is a cross between a Nubian (they have long floppy ears) and a Nigerian Dwarf (they are short and round). I am excited to one day be a milk goat just like my mama and have my milk be made into wonderful cheese and bottled to drink.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born on February 11, 2025, on Spenker Family Farm in Lodi.

Q: Who are your parents?

A: My farmers are Kate Spenker and Sarah Spenker Pratt. They take care of me and all my fellow goats at Spenker Family Farm. ♦

CARS, BOATS AND MORE!

Runabouts on the River celebrated beautiful vintage cars and antique boats on June 27, 2026, at the Stockton Sailing Club. There was live music, free boat rides on the San Joaquin River, children's activities, water rescue demonstrations, tours of the USS Lucid and more. The event, in its eighth year, broke the previous year's attendance record. The event was put on by the Antique & Class Boat Society of Northern California/Lake Tahoe. Learn more at acbsrotr.com. ♦

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HELEN RIPKEN



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Stuck in Lodi Car Show

Info: visitlodi.com

AUGUST 14

Reaching for the Stars Gala

University Plaza Hotel

Info: astrojrh.org

AUGUST 26

Sacred Voices Concert

Annunciation Cathedral

Info: annunciationstockton.org

AUGUST 2

WOW Free Admission Day

WOW Museum

Info: wowsciencemuseum.org

AUGUST 15

Sip n' Stroll

Brookside Classics

Info: hospicesj.org

AUGUST 28

Music Under the Stars

Private residence

Info: hospicesj.org

AUGUST 5, 12, 19

Concerts in the Park

Victory Park

Info: visitstockton.org

AUGUST 15

Barrio Fiesta

Weber Point Events Center

Info: (209) 598-5597

AUGUST 6, 13, 20, 27

Lodi Farmers Market

School Street

Info: visitlodi.com

AUGUST 21

Tigers Prowlin' the Mile

Miracle Mile

Info: (209) 481-1843

AUGUST 8

Stockton Police Public Safety Day

Weber Point Events Center

Info: visitstockton.org

AUGUST 21

Ducky Derby at SummerFest

Lincoln Center

Info: nochildabuse.org

AUGUST 14

Artsplash

Waterfront Warehouse

Info: visitstockton.com

AUGUST 22

WOW into the Future

WOW Science Museum

Info: WOWScienceMuseum.org

SAVE THE DATE

SEPTEMBER 19

Family Day in the Park

Weber Point Event Center

Info: familydayatthepark.com

SEPTEMBER 26

Concours d'Elegance

Ironstone Vineyards

Info: ironstoneconcours.com

SEPTEMBER 26

CASA Superhero Run

Lodi Lake

Info: nochildabuse.org

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