

PANIL Notes

Volume 32

Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League - PO Box 20375, Oakland CA 94620

June 2007

ASKED ON THE AVENUE

Where Do You Volunteer?

Photos by Joyce Benna



**Cliff Falloon,
Pleasant Valley Court**

I work with the median-strip group on Pleasant Valley, doing planting, weeding, and watering. We run a hose from the car wash across the street and use plants that are donated to us. I really should be working in my own backyard, but it's more fun with the group.



Pam Feack, Monte Vista Ave.

I volunteer twice a week at the American Cancer Society's Discovery Shop on 41st Street. My work there combines two of my favorite activities—shopping and getting to know my neighbors!



Don Gates, Ramona Ave.

I provide acupuncture, herbal medicine, dietary and lifestyle counseling, and nutritional supplements to HIV+ residents at Vital Life Services on Shattuck in Oakland. I also give talks to local university and high school students about Chinese medicine and general health care.



Kathrine Jenks, Ramona Ave.

I tutor kids at Elizabeth House, a transitional residence for women and children in North Oakland. I help with homework and just chat with the kids. It's good when you see a family move on, but also sad because you've become attached to them.



Sarita Cordell, Kelton Courtt

When I retired I became an avid volunteer. I currently work at the Berkeley library bookstore and at the county courthouse downtown. And I teach English through UC's English in Action program. My current "language partner" is a Korean-born scientist at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory who needs help with colloquial English.

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See You on the C!

By William Manley

Ten-year AC Transit director and long time PANIL activist Chris Peeples came to the April PANIL meeting to talk about the transit agency. As many of you who attended might remember, the meeting focused on transportation alternatives. In addition to AC Transit, we discussed the City Bicycle Plan and the City CarShare program, but we could have had an entire meeting on AC Transit.

Chris detailed the background of how the agency emerged from the real estate aspirations of the legendary Francis "Borax" Smith to become the Key System; how it nearly disappeared and was reborn as AC Transit. Chris explained why we have so many streets that head off Broadway at angles, e.g. Telegraph, Piedmont, College: they couldn't make 90-degree turns!

He noted that the new "smart growth" approach of putting housing adjacent to transit was actually the norm 100 years ago. Chris recounted the history of the three-mile Berkeley pier that took passengers on train to the middle of SF Bay so they could take a 10-minute ferry ride into San Francisco. Sounds like a good system for today!

Beleaguered bus routes

AC Transit adopted a policy a few years ago that seems to be common sense: put the busses where there is high ridership. But that policy does not bode well for hill dwellers who take the bus in relatively low numbers. As a result some local routes that serve the hills may fall under the sharp budget-cutting axe. Chris mentioned that both the "C" (transbay) that comes to 41st and Piedmont as well as the 59 that runs down Piedmont Avenue are routes being scru-

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June PANIL Meeting
Wednesday, June 13, 7:30 pm
Piedmont Gardens 11th Floor Sky Room
110 41st Street

Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council
Paul Brekke-Meisner

Oakland Heritage Alliance
Summer Walking Tours
Annalee Allen

**Piedmont Avenue
Neighborhood
Improvement League
PO Box 20375
Oakland CA 94620
www.panil.org**

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See You on the C! — AC Transit

Continued from page 1

tinized for their low ridership levels. There is the possibility that the route for the 59 could be redrawn, since ridership picks up as soon as it comes off Broadway Terrace onto Broadway. So the advice is “use it or lose it!”

And of course the money woes. The governor—for all his “green” publicity—has not demonstrated much enthusiasm for public transit. Gov. Schwarzenegger’s budget slashed almost \$1 billion in transit funds. But there may be hope. We are told that the legislature might attempt to restore some of that funding in the “May Revise” of the budget.

Some Good News

Don’t have the right change? Frustrated by others (or yourself) delaying the bus while they fish through their pockets? Well, TransLink may be the answer. The pass contains a chip that is quickly read by a sensor on the vehicle. Not only is it faster and easier to use, but it can be used on multiple systems. AC and Golden Gate transit will be first on board. But glitches (failed reads) have delayed the rollout. BART is scheduled to be included in 2008.

In the areas of comfort and efficiency, AC Transit has been rapidly replacing its older, noisier buses with new, low emission, quieter ones. For the transbay routes, AC is using tour-type buses, with plush seats and a smooth, quiet ride. It’s a great way to see the spectacular vistas from the Bay Bridge; as an added bonus the busses are now WiFi equipped so you

can connect to the internet with your laptop. For travel within the East Bay, AC introduced the new European-style Van Hool busses, with lower contour for easier and faster boarding, and cleaner and quieter engines. AC Transit has the most advanced hydrogen-fuel cell program in the world: the only emission from the tailpipe is water. About a dozen of these busses are now in operation.

Asked why AC Transit use wasn’t increasing as fast as other transit systems across the country in the wake of rising gas prices, Chris said that apparently it is. Among agencies in the Bay Area, only Muni could boast better ridership increases.

There were also questions on AC’s relationship to the budding van pool services like Emery-go-round. Chris said that AC Transit is cooperating with these private vendors to complement their service offerings. We also learned that the benefits for van pool drivers – and corresponding labor costs – are far below AC Transit’s.

On the whole, Chris proved himself an informed and inspiring spokesperson for the Agency. We know he practices what he preaches because he told us last month that he put his ‘66 Volvo up on blocks 7 years ago and rides the bus everywhere.

See www.ACTransit.org
for routes and schedules.

Let’s see more of each other on the C.
And the 59 and 51! Don’t forget the 12.

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Where Do You Volunteer?

Continued from Page 1



**Ruby Long,
Monte Cresta Ave.**

I'm a docent at the UC Botanical Garden, lead "brain aerobics" at the downtown Oakland senior center, and do the mailings for

California Writers Club. I founded Reading Partners at Piedmont Avenue Elementary and continue to coordinate the program. I spend half an hour a week reading with a student—this year it's a fifth-grader who loves animals. I'm learning a lot from him!

CORRECTION

Last month's *Asked on the Avenue* contained this answer from Lise LaTorre but not her photo. Our apologies to Lise and to Ursula Lang whose photo appeared by mistake.

How has the high price of gasoline affected you?



**Lise LaTorre,
Ramona Ave.**

I've been trying to reduce my reliance on gasoline for a long time now, commuting to San Francisco on BART, driving a hybrid for those times I must go by car, and living in this wonderful neighborhood where I can get everywhere I need to on foot.

Calendar

(for more neighborhood events go to www.panil.org/calendar)

PANIL Meeting

2nd Wednesday of the month
7:30 to 9 pm
11th Floor Sky Room
Piedmont Gardens
110 41st Street

PANIL Steering Committee
email info@panil.org for time, date and place of monthly meeting

**Glen Echo Creek
Work Day**

2nd Saturday of the month
Monte Vista Avenue, 9:30 am
654.1930

Mt. View Cemetery Tour

Docent led tour
2nd Saturday of the month
10 am, FREE

**Events at the
Chapel of the Chimes**

4499 Piedmont Avenue
654.0123

Historical and Botanical Tour

3rd Saturday of the month
10 am to noon, FREE

Jazz at the Chimes

3rd Sunday of the month
\$20/children under 12 FREE
2 to 4 pm

**Oakland Heritage Alliance
Lecture Series**

2nd Thursday of the monthly
7:30 pm
\$8 OHA members/\$10 non-members/\$5 low income
Further information:
www.oaklandheritage.org or
763.9218

**Piedmont Avenue
Branch Library
160 41st Street, 597.5011**

Storytimes

Toddlers
Wednesday, 10:15 am
Pre school
Wednesday, 11 am

Saturday Knitting Club
Every Saturday 3 to 4 pm

To place an item on PANIL's calendars, send e-mail to: info@panil.org

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HONORS BESTOWED IN RECOGNITION OF WORK ABOVE AND BEYOND ON BEHALF OF THE PIEDMONT AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD

WHEREAS, The Piedmont Avenue neighborhood is a 40 square block area bounded by Broadway, MacArthur, Oakland Avenue and the City of Piedmont, centered along Piedmont Avenue, one of Oakland’s most charming and lively neighborhood commercial streets; and

WHEREAS, Due to the energy, intelligence and persistence of its residents, and its neighborhood group, the Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League, the Piedmont Avenue neighborhood is among the most active and lively of North Oakland’s many great neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, In each neighborhood are specific individuals who go above and beyond in their efforts to improve their communities, organize their neighbors, keep their political leaders accountable, and make Oakland a better place for all of us to live, work and play; and

WHEREAS, Mike Lydon is one of these individuals

His commitment to clean and litter-free streets and public space is extraordinary. Mike is the co-founder of Piedmont Avenue’s Clean Sweep program, which gathers contributions from merchants to pay for cleaner streets, and himself is a one-man custodian of the Key Route Plaza and Piedmont Plaza, as well as picking up the slack for all who are charged with keeping the Avenue clean. On top of this, he is a Neighborhood Watch Captain and is even responsible for getting the Key Route Plaza clock installed and changing the time himself every spring and fall for Daylight Savings Time.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That Jane Brunner, Councilmember for District 1, on the occasion of the Second Annual Piedmont Avenue Tulip and Art Festival, hereby recognizes Ann Kraynak and Mike Lydon for their vision, passion, and commitment, and joins her community in conveying heartfelt appreciation for their work.

WHEREAS, Ann Kraynak is one of these individuals

Owner of a Piedmont Avenue business for more than 30 years and active member of the Piedmont Avenue Merchants’ Association, Ann has promoted and improved the Avenue in countless ways.

From putting on the Halloween Celebrations to raising money for murals on the Avenue to defending Piedmont Avenue’s zoning, Ann’s efforts have touched every aspect of life in the neighborhood.

During the finale of the Tulip and Art Festival, organized by the Piedmont Avenue Merchants Association, Councilmember Jane Brunner presented awards to Ann Kraynak and Mike Lydon at Key Route Plaza

Below, Mike Lydon on duty with the Clean Sweep program.

Photos by Phil Laing





Kaiser's Bettie Coles, area manager, East Bay, and John Loftus, MD, physician-in-chief, pose with very un-medical equipment at the groundbreaking ceremony April 3, 2007. The current hospital tower is visible in the background.

Below: Jane Brunner at Groundbreaking Ceremony

Kaiser Construction

By Valerie Winemiller

Kaiser Phase 1 construction of its new medical services building and related garage between MacArthur and 38th Street is underway.

In speeches during the groundbreaking ceremony, both Kaiser's Physician-in-Chief, John Loftus, MD, and Councilmember Jane Brunner acknowledged community involvement during the project's permit approval process; both stated that the project was improved by the participation by neighbors. PANIL neighbors were active in the coalition called KENIC—Kaiser Expansion Neighborhood Impact Coalition.

A new series of discussions with neighbors will take place when the planning for Phase 2, the hospital replacement at the site of the MB Center, moves forward.

Photos by Joyce Benna
Courtesy of Kaiser Permanente



**If you want to support
PANIL's efforts**
to keep the
neighborhood informed
and make our voices heard,
become a member.

Send \$15, with your name, address,
e-mail address, and phone number,
to PANIL, Box 20375,
Oakland 94620.

SEND PHOTOS OF YOUR HOUSE

Rehab It Right

Expert preservationist and designer Jane Powell answers your questions at an evening sponsored by the Oakland Heritage Alliance. At this last in the current OHA lecture series, Powell, owner of House Dressing, will discuss the houses of audience members in this unusual evening. To participate: e-mail a few photos of your home or project to nj2oakland@yahoo.com.

Time and place: Chapel of the Chimes, 4499 Piedmont Avenue, Thursday, June 14, beginning at 7:30 pm.

Donation: \$10 non-members/\$8 members of OHA.

For other information go to www.oaklandheritage.org

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Glorious Food

SHOPGIRL

This month we bypass our neighborhood supermarkets—excellent though they are—to browse the stalls and aisles of specialty food stores.

Open since January 2005, the **Food Mill Food Farm'acy** is a partnership between Kaiser Permanente Hospital and the nearly 75-year-old Food Mill in the Laurel District. The store sells foods recommended by Kaiser doctors that promote ideal weight and a healthy lifestyle. But don't think that means "boring." Besides bulk grains and beans, fresh produce and juices, and nutritional supplements, the Food Farm'acy also sells delicious to-go lunches—salads, sandwiches, sushi, and wraps—for less than \$7, and organic Fair Trade coffee by the pound or the cup. The freezer is stocked with heart-healthy, eco-friendly ostrich and buffalo patties as well as grass-fed beef (\$7.49/lb.). **Maria Walker**, who co-manages the store with Food Mill veteran **Michael Lewis**, offers natural-health consultations and works with Kaiser on education programs. Treat yourself to a 30-minute chair massage for \$25 (Monday through Friday, 11 am to 2 pm).

The tiny **Kaiser Permanente Oakland Farmers' Market**, open Fridays year round, is the perfect place to pick up fresh salad greens, a loaf of bread, a basket of berries, and a bouquet for the weekend. Most weeks only about five vendors show up, but they offer a good seasonal selection. Shop for stone fruit, juice, and almonds at the Lone Oak Ranch stall; find leeks (\$1.50/bunch) and fava beans (\$2/lb.) at Happy Boy Farms; buy bread and baked goods at Vital Vittles. The fresh berries, trucked in from Gilroy, disappear quickly, so show up early. Every other week Small Bees, from the Santa Clara Valley, brings an assortment of honey and other bee-based products: candles, lip balm, soaps, and rich hand creams (\$5.50/2-oz. jar). Don't forget to pick up some flowers, which are a real bargain: no bouquet we saw cost more than \$8.

A.G. Ferrari has been on Piedmont Ave. for 20 years, but the company's roots go back to 1919. Today, **Paul Ferrari**—grandson of the founder—travels to Italy every six weeks to find "the best products and the best ingredients from the best vendors" in that country. Specialty cheeses from the Piemonte region include earthy Bonrus, made from cow's and sheep's milk and aged 21 days, and La Tur delle Langhe (each \$24.99/lb). Every two weeks the store imports fresh Burrata cheese; made from cow's milk infused with heavy cream, it's especially good on pasta. Other delicacies include panforte (describe as "Sicily's fruit-and-nut energy bar;" \$6.99 and up); Sicilian biscuits in lemon, orange, pistachio, and almond (\$14.29/250g); and a new line of pasta from Abruzzo made by a single artisan, Giacomo Santoleri, from farro, a barley-like grain (\$7.99/500g). Based in San Leandro, A.G. Ferrari has 13 stores in the Bay Area; Paul Ferrari—who attended St. Leo the Great School for a year—says "we work best in neighborhoods, and Piedmont Ave. is the quintessential neighborhood."

Along one wall of César, the bar-restaurant, is **César Mercado**, which manager **Dianne McArthur** describes as "the pantry of César—everything you need to have a tapas party of your own." Most of the products are imported from Spain, with an emphasis on the Catalán region. (An exception is the wine selection, which is international.) Among the more unusual items in stock: squid ink (75 cents for eight small packets); *fuet*, a Catalán pork sausage (\$12.99/lb.); *membrillo*, or quince paste (\$9/lb.); *turrón* (Spanish nougat candy); and house-made *panellets*, delicious soft cookies made with sweet potatoes, rice, and no flour at all (\$4.50 for a generous bag). The ice cream (\$7.50/pint) comes from a small Sebastopol supplier, in flavors like crème catalán, saffron orange, espresso, and Sambucca. On the last Saturday of the month, between noon and 3, there's a regional wine tasting in the Mercado.

Where can you find Crimean sparkling wine, Bulgarian sour cherries, Israeli cookies, and Australian Vegemite? At **Euromix**, the Russian-owned deli with an international outlook. True to its roots, Euromix stocks frozen blintzes, plemeny, and vareniki. But you'll also discover mushroom, salmon, and crab patés from Latvia (\$2.99 each); coffee from Austria and the Netherlands; curry ketchup from Germany; and beer from Ukraine, Poland, and Croatia. Sausage aficionadas will have a field day sampling "piquant Moldavan sausage" (\$5.99/lb.), "Moscow holiday sausage" (\$6.29/lb.), pork bologna, salt pork, and Canadian bacon. Be sure to be there when the delivery truck from San Francisco's Cinderella Bakery pays a visit: those poppy-seed pastries are beyond scrumptious.

Out here on the Pacific, it can be hard to sample a taste of the Caribbean. That's why **Art's Jamaican Market's** customers come from as far away as San Diego, according to owner **Art Sullivan**. Art—who himself came to the Bay Area from Jamaica—stocks his small store with West Indian foods that evoke nostalgia in natives and delighted curiosity in neophytes: frozen goat meat "for stew or curry" (\$4.35/lb.), bammy (casava bread; "just soak in milk and fry"), beef patty (a turnover; \$1.60 each); and unsliced hard dough bread (\$4.50 for a 44-ounce loaf). Beverages are a mix of exotic and old-fashioned: sour sop drink (good for the nerves, says Art), maubry syrup (which Art says lowers blood pressure), Horlick's malt drink, Ovaltine, Dr. King's sulphur bitters, Diet Ting, and 2-liter bottles of Old Jamaican Ginger Beer. And then there are the shelves of hot sauce: Salsa Calypso, Pickapeppa, three kinds of Scotch Bonnet, and much more. Cool off with half-gallons of Mitchell's ice cream from San Francisco (\$8.50).

For store addresses and phone numbers, see sidebar on page 7

Where to Find Glorious Food

Food Mill Food Farm'acy
 255 West Macarthur Blvd.
 595-3633
 www.foodmill1933.com

Kaiser Permanente Oakland Farmers' Market
 3801 Howe St.
 10 am–2 pm Fridays, year round
 www.pcfma.com

A.G. Ferrari
 4001 Piedmont Ave.
 547-7222
 www.agferrari.com

César Mercado
 4039 Piedmont Ave.
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Euromix Delicatessen
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POEMS ABOUT ANYTHING

The Bard of Piedmont Ave.

by Nancy Friedman

Zachary Houston sits on the corner of Piedmont and 41st, in front of Starbucks, wearing a Hawaiian shirt and a red gimme cap. On his lap is a tiny Hermes Rocket typewriter. At his feet are a cup of iced coffee and a hand-lettered sign that reads, "Poems About Anything \$?" Houston inserts a white adhesive label into the typewriter's platen and bends to his task. The typewriter lost its ribbon some time ago, but Houston is unconcerned. "*Felix culpa*," he says: "a happy accident." The keys emboss their symbols into the soft paper, leaving impressions that can be read only in daylight, which pleases the poet.



Right now Houston is writing "a whimsical cat poem" for a woman named Regina who just had her hair cut on the avenue. He's also written about affordable housing, the Peace Corps, and, of course, love and death. In 15 minutes, in exchange for a rumpled \$5 bill, he produced a poem about Piedmont Ave. that included a line about "the predatory relationship of artists and patrons." He handed it over with a sheepish smile, saying he was new to the neighborhood and still getting acquainted.

Houston, who turns 25 on June 11, studied linguistics and art at Sonoma State. He quit his job at the Paper Source in Berkeley on April 1, 2006, to become a full-time public poet and part-time artist. Before moving to a house near Macarthur and Telegraph, in May of this year, he had hung his poetry shingle at the Rockridge BART station and at the Berkeley Bowl Marketplace. It was at the Berkeley Bowl that a producer for CBS News discovered him; a story about Houston appeared on the CBS Interactive website on May 9, 2007 (see <http://tinyurl.com/yposxe>).

So far, Houston is favorably impressed by his new neighborhood's largesse. "In Berkeley I got mostly \$1 and \$2 payments," he says. On Piedmont, one patron has given him a \$50 check, another a handful of golden-dollar coins. On the other hand, "A shifty-eyed hippie not only didn't pay me, he stole my burrito!" He seems amused by the irony.

Then it's back to the typewriter. It's late afternoon; the fog is coming in on, yes, little cat feet. A poet's work is never done.

Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League

P.O. Box 20375

Oakland, CA 94620



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Get a Clue with Books at the Piedmont Avenue Library

By Helen Bloch, Children's Librarian

Join us for a summer of mysterious fun at the library!

Between June 9 and August 11, children and families can "Get a Clue" during the Oakland Public Library's Summer Reading Game. Children can win a free book and more by signing up for the program and reading eight hours. Parents and older children may read to children who aren't yet reading. Children who read eight hours may enter a raffle for even more prizes. Also join us for an early reading fun program where you can learn creative ways to make reading more enjoyable.

Children
can win a
free book!

The Piedmont Avenue Library will celebrate the Summer Reading Game with a series of performances. Join us on Mondays at 7 pm on the lawn for the following shows:

- June 11 Storyteller/Puppeteer, Willy Claffin
- June 18 Singers, Cross Pulse Rhythm Duo
- June 25 Treasure Hunt/Ice Cream Social
- June 30 East Bay Vivarium, Saturday at 1:30 pm
- July 9 Magic Dan
- July 16 Early Reading Fun!
- July 23 Dragon Crafts with MOCHA
- July 30 Tommy's Train Trouble, Puppet Art Theater
- August 6 Clown/Balloon Maker, Bitzy the Clown

We will be closing the book on these mysteries with a FREE festive day at the Oakland Museum on August 12 from 12:30 - 4:30. Exhibits, stories, arts and crafts, and magician Timothy James will be there.

Also this summer we will be holding a Teen Summer Program filled with books, volunteer opportunities, and programs. Stay tuned for more details.

For more information, contact Children's Librarian Helen Bloch at 597-5011 or go to the OPL website, www.oaklandlibrary.org.

Bella Ceramica

Bella Ceramica
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PANIL Notes takes a holiday

Next issue will be
July/August 2007

July PANIL meeting
Wednesday, July 11, 7:30 pm
Piedmont Gardens 11th Floor Sky Room
110 41st Street