

NEIGHBORHOOD UPDATES

East Richmond Heights, Contra Costa County Vol. 1 #3 October 2020

Open for Voting on Election Day!

Wahoo! Your neighborhood polling place at 6226 Arlington Boulevard, will be open on November 3, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. with social distancing in place. If you arrive by car, remember to enter at the north end of Patterson Circle and exit at the south end. If you have mobility issues, use the second driveway, which takes you right down to the Friendship Hall doors. Drive between the tent and the building.

Want to turn in your ballot before Election Day? You can mail it in, following the instructions on your ballot. Or, you can drop it off at one of the County's 500 pound, ¼" steel, securely bolted, ballot drop boxes. There are 37 boxes county-wide, and the closest one to us is at 450 Civic Center Plaza. This box, which can hold thousands of ballots, is emptied daily by deputized Elections Department employees and transported in a secure container to the Elections Department. If you choose either of these options, BE SURE TO SIGN THE BACK OF YOUR ENVELOPE! If you do vote early, track your ballot by going to WheresMyBallot.sos.ca.gov. Otherwise, see you at the polls!

Red Flag Warning Continues

If you signed up for alerts (see the September issue,) you know that we are currently in a Red Flag Warning, especially in the area of Wildcat Canyon. Forget about BBQ-ing or any other kind of burning. Work on your "Go Bag" and figure out what friend you'll go stay with, if we go under mandatory evacuation. Go to cwsalerts.com or call (925) 655-011 to register for alerts.

COVID, SCHMOVID: You Still Need a Flu Shot!

Don't let another week go by without getting your flu shot. Get one for free on Sunday October 18, 12 noon - 4:00 p.m. at the Tibetan Center of Northern California, over in Richmond Annex at 5200 Dalai Lama Avenue. This is the former west end of Huntington Avenue, off of San Joaquin, south of American Soil and Stone and north of Panama Avenue .

Live in the Unincorporated Heights? This is your meeting!

Tuesday, October 20, at 6:30 p.m., is the next East Richmond Heights MAC meeting via Zoom. If you have already signed up, you should receive the meeting agenda and link on Friday, October 16. To get added to that meeting notification list, email James Lyons at Supervisor Gioia's office: james.lyons@bos.cccounty.us or call him at (510) 231-8686.

What! How Come I Only Get to Vote For One School Board Trustee?

Indeed, the school district has switched to "Trustee Area Elections" in order to comply with the 2001 California Voters Rights Act, legislation that codifies efforts to increase minority representation on school boards and city councils. In 2018 WCCUSD held a series of public hearings to determine how the school district could be divided into five district that would promote the election of more non-white school board members. Our current board, the last to be elected in an "at large" election, is composed of 3 Latinx, one African American, and one white trustee, but historically WCCUSD has had a predominately white Board of Trustees. All voters will now vote for only one school board member. East Richmond Heights, along with El Cerrito, Kensington, Point Richmond and Richmond Annex are in Trustee Area 5.

How Will They Spend Their Last Few Nights Together?

Our current WCCUSD School Board meets together only a handful more times, at 6:30 p.m., every other Wednesday. To see the October 21 and November 4 and 18 meetings go to: wccusd.net, "About Us," "Our Board," "Quick Links," "Agendas" then, finally, "View current agenda online." The Zoom meeting link is at the top of the agenda.

One Small Way Your Family Can Help the District

Do you know, even under "Distance Learning," if your child is not up to date on their immunizations, WCCUSD gets no funds to educate your child? Contra Costa Public Health Immunization Clinics provide shots to children and adults on a first-come, first-

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served basis each Friday, 1:00 - 4:30 p.m. at West County Health Center, 13601 San Pablo Avenue, 2nd floor. Call (925) 313-6767 for more info.

Making a Difference in This Crazy World, for Over 30 Years

What the heck is the Richmond Emergency Food Pantry? Open Door member Anne Hause, an REFP volunteer for 17 years, tells us the Pantry is open every Tuesday and Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., distributing food to West Contra Costa County low income households. To register, visit the Pantry at Grace Lutheran Church at Barrett and 24th Street, to complete a simple form that asks only name, birthdate, address, monthly income, and number of adults and number of children in the household. No proof of income is needed. Once registered, you are allowed to visit the Pantry once a month to receive one box plus one bag of food.

The box is filled with staples (such as pasta, rice, beans, peanut butter, juices, and sauces) that REFP has purchased through the Contra Costa Food Bank in Concord. The bag is filled with miscellaneous food items collected through efforts such as Open Door's October 31 Food Drive. Prior to COVID, clients could visit the courtyard at Grace Lutheran to also select from large bins of fruits and vegetables that REFP purchases from the Contra Costa Food Bank and Giovanni's Market. Now, the fresh produce is bagged and given to clients, to reduce contact.

Anne volunteers each Tuesday helping to prepare the bags and boxes. She says the Pantry is "tremendously blessed with food" and "donations are very much wanted and appreciated...nothing goes to waste." Many of the usual volunteers are in at-risk groups, due to age, so this summer many of the replacement volunteers Anne worked with were college students and now many of them are people who have been laid off their jobs due to the pandemic. If you are interested in volunteering, find out more about the Food Pantry by visiting: refp.org.

The pantry has been running low on dry cereal, a particularly popular item. Consider also donating canned tuna, peanut butter, apple sauce, or canned fruit, which she says are always a big hit with clients.

If your family needs a bit of help each month, please check out the Richmond Emergency Food Pantry. And if you want to make a difference in this crazy world, please donate on October 31.

How Many COVID Costumes Will We See?

Is your family debating what to do about our first ever pandemic Halloween? Here's a safe way to make the day special, while helping others, too. Drop by Open Door UMC at 6226 Arlington Boulevard, on Halloween Day, Saturday, October 31, 12 noon - 2:00 p.m., to drop off food at our Food Drive for Richmond Food Pantry (see article elsewhere in this issue,) then remember a loved one at the All Saints Day Altar. We'd love to see you kids (and parents, too,) in your costumes!

Pastor Caiti explains the altar, to which you are welcome to add a memento of a deceased loved one:

"On All Saints Day we remember all —familiar, famous, complicated or obscure—who are part of the "communion of saints," whose lives still impact us today. In the United Methodist Church, we remember by creating an altar of flowers, pictures, and mementos that remind us of those who have gone before. We speak their names publicly and pray for the many ways they have blessed our lives. In return we seek to be a blessing to the world with the life we have.

Some people mark the days from Oct-31st-Nov. 2nd with Dia De Los Muertos or Todos Los Santos, which are similar traditions. Others of us have never observed these days before. We invite our neighbors to interact with the altar in whatever way helps honor the saints you wish to remember. This year, on Saturday, October 31 or Sunday November 1, drop by individually, or as a family, to pray for the saints who have gone before. Please wear your mask and observe social distancing. See you there!---Pastor Caiti

Who Wrote This?

This neighborhood newsletter is brought to you by your neighbors at Open Door United Methodist Church. Our volunteer, Joanna Pace, writes the articles and would love to get leads from you! Contact office@opendoorunitedmethodistchurch.org or (510) 525-3500, with hot news tips, or if you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, or via USPS, or if you would like to help deliver paper copies to your block. Open Door is a Reconciling United Methodist Congregation whose 10 a.m. Sunday service is available by visiting opendoorumc.org