



The news and more for rural West Sonoma County

WEST COUNTY BUZZ

By Elisabeth Parker for the *Russian River Monthly*, February, 2009

WINDS OF CHANGE? Or is it the sound of the media's collective flatulence as they fawn over Barack Obama? After whose inauguration, Representative Lynn Woolsey and her Washington colleagues toasted the new president at the Congressional Luncheon with Russian River bubbly from Korbel Champagne Cellars. Meanwhile Guerneville's Tacqueria Tapatia served live inaugural coverage on a big-screen TV with their breakfast burritos ...

Speaking of newly elected young whippersnappers facing major challenges, colleagues report that 5th District Supervisor Efren Carrillo works 16-hour days, and doesn't even drink coffee. "The favorite part of my job is knowing that I'll be playing a role in turning these challenges into opportunities," says Carrillo, adding that, "The people I get to meet every day from all walks of life make this role very enjoyable." His jam-packed schedule includes department briefings, meetings, communicating with constituents, speaking engagements, and site tours. "It's amazing how we manage to fit that all in one day!" jokes Carrillo.

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW: Carrillo recently appointed Pamela Davis of North Bay Corporation (Sonoma County's garbage and recycling company) as the new planning commissioner, while local builder and activist Tom Lynch amply fills the vacant Zoning Board seat. "Efren's great!" declares Lynch. "He's such a breath of fresh air." Lynch looks forward to focusing on creating "green-collar" jobs, encouraging energy conservation and promoting environmental sustainability.

Carrillo believes that rural areas like the Russian River are "at times forgotten." He declares, "One priority for the Russian River is to make certain that local government works for them. There are many issues that we can tackle," including water management, environmental health, conservation of waterways and other natural resources, building a strong local economy, providing adequate mental health and medical services, and creating affordable housing.

TOUGH TIMES: Meanwhile, outgoing Planning Commissioner Rue Furch joins the ranks of the unemployed ... On the River, when the going gets tough, the

tough work at Safeway. Like Rio Nido contractor Stan Groth, who started in January. "I like the people, and the pay is good," says Groth ... Speaking of jobs, Dan Coshnear, author of the award-winning short story collection, "Jobs and Other Preoccupations", is featured in this month's "North Bay Bohemian". "It's nice to be recognized," says Coshnear. He lives in Guerneville with his wife and two children.

WAR ON TERROR: The so-called "Guerneville Safeway Terrorist" called in sick to work on Jan. 6th and threatened to shoot everyone. Managers shut the down the store for four hours until the suspect, a 45-year old Cazadero resident and (presumably former) Safeway employee, was taken into custody ...

Curiously, the suspect targeted his fellow employees instead of the evil corporate masterminds of Safeway's diabolical plot to drive customers insane with ongoing price increases, out-of-stock items, and random product relocation. He reportedly sought revenge after a manager reprimanded him in front of coworkers. So WHY was he released on bail nine hours later? Sergeant Kevin Young from the Sheriff's Department explains, "His fourth amendment rights allow him to make bail."

MARCH ON WASHINGTON: Meanwhile, the Monte Rio School's eighth grade class is raising money for their upcoming Washington DC trip. Julie DeCarly (Shelby's mother) states, "We've got a jam-packed itinerary ... It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity." Plans include visits to the Smithsonian, White House, Lincoln Memorial, and other attractions. But first, they need \$20,000 ...

"We're a third of the way there," says Allison Van Rillaer (Jocelyn's mother), thanks to a flurry of fundraising events, including a successful New Year's Eve bash at Duncans Mills' newly re-opened Blue Heron, which raised \$1300. Owner and fourth-generation local Jaime O'Bryan says he was glad to help. Dinner music, champagne and a one-night's stay at the newly refurbished Timber Cove Inn for the silent auction were provided by Ralph and Michelle Higgins, Korbel Cellars, and general manager Kurt Piccilo.

ACT LOCALLY: Chuck Ramsey from the Monte Rio Community Alliance has good news for those concerned about the immense and unsightly pile of rubble blocking the Monte Rio's Park and Ride and the entrance to Starrett Hill Drive. The Department of Transportation has made good progress since the retaining wall collapsed on Christmas Day due to heavy rains. "The [concrete] forms are up and Starrett Drive should be open by the end of March," reports Ramsey, muttering, "It's been a real pain getting home on Starrett Hill." Apparently, the only other entrance is so narrow that drivers are required to do a three-point turn to get in and out ... Alas, with the Park and Ride out of commission, carpooling isn't an option.

MISCELLANEOUS TIDBITS: Valentine's Day approaches and love is in the air ... Or perhaps it's the usual herbaceous aroma wafting from Kaya,

Guerneville's purveyors of coffee, tea & medicinal marijuana. Efren Carrillo looks forward to "spending Valentine's Day at the Russian River Rotary's Annual Crab Feed. I look forward to seeing many of you there!" Local celebrity Vira Burgerman (the California Mermaid) has moved her hair salon to downtown Guerneville. Rio Nido will soon have an organic community garden, thanks to a persistent band of neighbors and the Russian River Parks and Recreation department. Guerneville's Kings and Queens vintage clothing shop is about to break Memories that Linger's record for longest going-out-of-business sale ever. Last month, the "Going out of business sign" was joined by a smaller sign announcing, "Gone for Jan. Back in Feb." Guerneville writer Lynn Millar exclaims, "I love that! We're going out of business but now we need a month off!"