

# Camp Meeker Beat

By Tom Austin

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Ah, spring. We are finally drying out after a very wet year. We welcome the rain, but when the sun returns to our shady canyon...ahhh. As turnings of the seasons go, winter-to-spring is an easy one to like.

How better to celebrate this than with the annual Camp Meeker VFD pancake breakfast? It's a familiar ritual to most of you, so any reciting of the details is just to make your mouth water. A stack of soggies, a coupla links, fluffy scrambled eggs, perhaps a mimosa just this once. Crisp, shiny red trucks effusing with dials, switches, gauges, toggles and hoses. A chance to stock up on the all-important VFD sweatshirts and other paraphernalia (that black hoody hoodie got me through the wilds of the Tunnel Expedition with aplomb). You ready yet? I am. As always, eight to noon on the Sunday morning of Memorial Day weekend.

Making it a bit poignant is the sad fact that this will be the last official VFD pancake breakfast for outgoing fire chief Fred Meyer and his firefightin' wife Dani. They are retiring and moving to the city, probably passing on their way a passel of folks retiring and moving in the other direction. Anyhow, we're certainly hoping that next year's pancake breakfast will find their smiling faces among the guests. Make sure to stop by and thank Fred and Dani for all their hard work over the years. Just between you and me, make sure to congratulate Fred on his Volunteer of the Year award – mum's the word!

Speaking of cycles, the younger generations are stepping up to fill the gaps left behind by departing stalwart citizens like Fred and Dani. Just downstream of us at Westminster Woods, students in the Environmental Education Program from Creative Connections Arts Academy and Presentation School (whew! Hereafter, EEP-CCA-PS or just CCA for short) did their own bit of good for our local watershed. The students, along with officials from Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) and Warm Springs Hatchery – but now that I've got the

alphabet soup of thank-yous out of the way, I should start at the beginning – of the life cycle.

What did all those people do that was so cool? They're bringing salmon back to Dutch Bill Creek. Coho salmon, in fact. The endangered Coho was last seen in Dutch Bill way back during the Eisenhower years some time, but in 2003 some Coho got lost (they don't ALWAYS go back to their stream of origin, it seems) and spawned successfully in the creek. The resulting fingerlings were soon spirited away for their own protection (that's where Warm Springs Hatchery comes in) and eventually were released down the Russian River to the ocean. Those came back a few years later, and the work continues. This year, the students built a "smolt acclimation tank" for the purposes of allowing this year's Coho smolts (smolts are basically teenage Coho, hotrodding about for a couple of years in freshwater streams before their first trip to the ocean).

So the gist of it is our human teenagers built an acclimation tank for Coho salmon teenagers, allowing the salmon, full of eagerness and promise, to gambol and cavort in the waters of Dutch Bill Creek for a few weeks before being released. This will allow the teenage salmon to imprint on the waters of our home creek. This means that Dutch Bill will become THEIR home creek as well, when they are mature adults returning from the ocean with a grave sense of responsibility. I could extend the metaphor to the college years, but that takes place in a far off ocean and involves many bad puns on "schools of fish", so I will forswear out of my own grave sense of responsibility to the reader.

So thanks, teenage humans (and the many adult humans backing them up). Because of you, those Coho salmon teenagers think of here as home, and if we're lucky most of them will come back to Camp Meeker to raise their kids. They will return to a creek that has been mightily spruced up to welcome them home. That'll be around thanksgiving, so let's throw a party.

# Rockin' Rio Nido

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## RNHA Memorial Day BBQ kicks off summer season

We love the Rio Nido Homeowners Association (RNHA)'s summer events in their picnic area. The Memorial Day BBQ on Sunday, May 29<sup>th</sup> from 4-9 p.m. offers fun to kids and grown-ups alike. Enjoy a delicious chicken dinner, adult & kids' beverages, bake sale desserts, kids' talent show, mini-golf, music, dancing, marshmallow roast, and more! Also, look for the July 4<sup>th</sup> & Labor Day BBQs, pancake breakfasts, and Art Festival!

## Friends Of Rio Nido (FRN) elect bored members

Oops, we meant to say **BOARD** members. Neighbors elected Kim Holliday, John Uniack, Jennifer Ostrom, Matt Malik, and Marsee Henon for FRN's board of directors. Congratulations! No mud-slinging occurred because only five neighbors ran for the five available openings, which greatly reduced this election's entertainment value.

## Support the RNHA's proposal for Canyon 2 entrance!

Following Rio Nido's flat rejection of Dennis Judd's development plans for "downtown Rio Nido," the RNHA and local business owners presented an alternative proposal at the Russian River Redevelopment Oversight Committee (RRROC) meeting on April 21<sup>st</sup>. It requests funds for landscaping, public recreation areas, walkways, pocket parks, parking space, and legal protection from development.

## Help jazz up our dingy fire hydrants!

The Friends of Rio Nido (FRN) Beautification Committee needs volunteers to paint our fire hydrants and stanchions (boundary poles) to enhance their appearance and visibility. If you'd like to help, drop by the Rio Nido Roadhouse's parking lot on Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 a.m. with sloppy clothes and a paintbrush. First-comers get to wear those fabulous day-glow yellow and orange safety vests (until supplies run out)! Special thanks to Matt Malik for organizing, and Sweetwater Springs for supplying the paint.



Jesse James Chronis-Tocmakidis, Rio Nido's Pet of the Month

## Pet of the Month

Elena created this new monthly feature, because she KNOWS how we Rio Nidans totally LOVE our dogs, cats, and other critters. Please contact her about YOUR pet. For now, here's Jesse James, Elena's and her husband Larry Tocmakidis' adorable, playful, and rambunctious rottweiler pup. **LOVES:** Nice people, play-mates, bones, and rolls of toilet paper. **DISLIKES:** Mean people and cages.

## Rumor has it...

A filmmaker has contacted Kim Link and Brad Metzger about shooting scenes for a movie at the Roadhouse. Celebrity chef, "slow food" movement pioneer, and advocate for ecologically sustainable gardening and culinary education plans a visit to the Guerneville School in honor of its innovative garden, environmental education, and nutrition curriculum.

## Elisabeth Parker bids Rio Nido a fond farewell

After six-and-a-half years in this magically beautiful enclave beneath the redwoods and whimsical gaze of the RNHA Pee Wee Minigolf's "Winky Moon," Elisabeth and her family are moving to San Jose, where her husband now works. She has enjoyed working with neighbors towards a better community, and will miss everyone. If you want to run her Russian River Rattina blog and the Rio Nido Neighbors community email list, please email her at [RussianRiverRattina@gmail.com](mailto:RussianRiverRattina@gmail.com) before she leaves on June 1<sup>st</sup>.