PORT COSTA CONSERVATION SOCIETY

January 2026 Newsletter

Chairman's Say

2025 was a banner year for the Conservation Society. We fondly wished Jeff Wilson the best as he stepped off the Board, and welcomed Sheller Clark as she stepped on. Filling Jeff's shoes as Chair is a daunting task, but with the support of fellow board members the year has been a good one.

The school yard, lovingly maintained by Darryl Lavender, looks better than ever. Victoria Ryan took it upon herself to maintain our roses, which give beauty and scent spring through fall. Mornings when I open the gate I'm pleasantly surprised by the growing collection of outdoor toys, which just seem to appear for all to enjoy.

The building itself has been abuzz with activities and the sound of children enjoying the space. Photos and write ups are included in this newsletter.

The big news is that through the excellent grant writing and presenting skills of Vice Chair Suzanne, this year we will be putting a much-needed new roof on the building! The Crockett Community Foundation awarded us a grant of $58,000 for this. We are so grateful to the Foundation for their continued monetary and moral support!

Now we are looking ahead to wonderful things in 2026. Heartful thanks to all of you who support the Conservation Society. Our hope is that you will all be proud of the work we are doing, and that we will see you soon at one of our many community events!

I am honored to stand shoulder to shoulder with my fellow Board Members Anne, Michael, Sheller, and Suzanne.

The Port Costa Talent Show School Fundraiser – September 13, 2025

It was a picture-perfect day for the Port Costa Talent Show! It took nearly a year of preparation, but with a core group of volunteers and a huge group of event volunteers we honored the memory of PCCS volunteers Dee and Louis Stewart by bringing back their iconic Port Costa Talent Show fundraiser.

Over 70 entertainers graced the stage in 20 unique acts – from Cecil the Goat to the Carquinez/John Swett School Dance Troupe! Sarah Louise as the Master of Ceremony kept the show lively for the 300+ people in the audience (plus a gaggle of kids).

We thank the Crockett Community Foundation for their matching Grant. Also volunteer team leads – Laurie Beauchemin, Veronica Crane, Michael Dempsey, Margaret Faria, Tim Humann, Andy Lambert, Anne Mann, Daniel Rehnberg, Sage Rico, Reece Santos, Suzanne Statler and Lauren Thomas.

We are proud to have raised $5,000 to support the Port Costa School and to have brought so many together for a wonderful afternoon of hometown entertainment.

The Who LaLa's warming up for their show stopping act. It's true - the 1st half of the show ended after they performed – we needed time to clear off the cabbage that was thrown onto the stage by their adoring (and boo'ing) audience.

The Port Costa Community Garden

The Port Costa Community Garden thrives because of shared responsibility, steady participation, and a strong sense of community. As the garden moves into 2026, it does so with a thoughtful transition in leadership that reflects these same values.

After years of dedicated service, Rachel Mooney, Tammy Glassey, and Sheller Clark are passing on lead volunteer responsibilities. During their time, the garden benefited from consistent care, clear organization, and a welcoming atmosphere that encouraged participation from neighbors of all ages. Their efforts strengthened both the physical space and the relationships that make the garden a true community asset.

Stepping into lead volunteer roles for 2026 are Vicky Oswald, Marcel Wong, and Wendy Dutton. They bring a practical, easygoing approach and a shared commitment to keeping the garden healthy, inclusive, and enjoyable for everyone. Their focus will be on supporting the garden as a shared space and encouraging continued participation across the community.

Today, the garden includes 22 planting boxes. Twenty one are cared for by individual families, with one bed dedicated entirely to shared community herbs. Families grow a wide range of crops, from tomatoes and melons to artichokes and many varieties of squash.

The space also includes two small libraries, one for books and one for seeds, which make it easy to exchange knowledge and inspiration alongside plants. A veggie cart provides a place for surplus produce so nothing goes to waste, while picnic tables with umbrellas invite neighbors to connect and enjoy the space together.

Community gatherings continue to play an important role as well. This past year included another successful pumpkin carving party held inside the school, bringing together local families and welcoming new visitors from surrounding towns.

Costumes filled the space as pockets were loaded with candy and pumpkins and turnips were carved throughout the afternoon.

For many, it was a first introduction to the garden and the Port Costa community, reinforcing the garden's role as a place to gather and connect.

The current leadership transition reflects the garden at its best. Responsibilities are shared, knowledge is passed along, and the work continues in a collaborative spirit.

The garden's success is also supported by the efforts of many individuals. A special note of thanks goes to garden member Logan Wong, whose work helped launch the compost program and brought renewed energy to cleanup and organization. His contributions have made a visible difference to the garden's long term health.

With gratitude for the outgoing leaders and confidence in the incoming team, the Port Costa Community Garden enters 2026 well supported and ready for the year ahead.

Christmas in Port Costa

Christmas in Port Costa starts when the Christmas tree in front of the school building gets lit. It's a magnificent sight and we truly thank Dave Chamberlain and Tim Human for making this happen. Shortly after, the school welcomes all to the yearly Christmas potluck party, where even Santa arrives to the thrill of all; both children and adults. Again a thank you to Tim Human, Jason Brown and Sarah Louise, for all the work they put into making this evening so spectacular. It really warms my heart that our little town is able to set aside the troubles and business of the outside world and get together to enjoy the spirit of Christmas and Port Costa.

Second Sunday at the School

What could be so new, or so old, as sitting with your neighbors over a cup of coffee and just yakking? Community is how we get through difficult times, and this is an opportunity to be with your community. January marked our 1-year anniversary of Second Sunday at the School.

We offer great coffee, GREAT baked goods (all homemade), a full Art table for those of any age to express themselves, and a puzzle table for our spacial geniuses.

All you need to bring is the great conversation! The name says it all – the Second Sunday of every month, at the School. Drop in any time between 10am and 2pm to relax and unwind. We'd love to have you!

Coffee sign, pastry table, and art table photo by Jan MacKenzie

Financial Report

For a deeper understanding of Port Costa Society's finance, anyone is welcome to attend our monthly meeting or contact the treasurer.

But for a quick overview, the school has annual expenses of just about $26,000 for utilities, maintenance, taxes and other necessities. This does not include toilet paper, cleaning supplies etc.

Luckily, we have over recent years generated income from the many monthly activities we host in the school, such as Bingo, Dance, Yoga and Stretch classes. These activities created in our last fiscal year an amount just under $8,000. Then we can add Membership donations, and regular donations, and income from our Fundraisers. We thank Crockett Community Foundation for their support of Fundraising assistance and upgrades of the school building, such as the new handrails on the front steps.

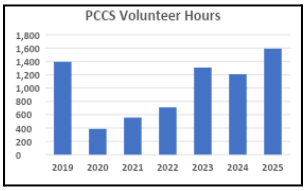
The net worth of the PCCS has averaged around $150,000 for the past 5 years. (This is without the value of the building and the land). We have to keep in mind that any grants that may come our way often require at least 10% to be covered by us. We have recently been approved for a much-needed new roof from CCF, and we can expect a rather large amount of copayment for this, which will decrease our bank holdings.

The board is very grateful for all contributions we receive, and we are doing our very best to maintain the school building for future generations of Port Costa residents.

Volunteers are the heart of PCCS!

Each month we record the hours that individuals volunteer their time for the Port Costa Conservation Society. These people take time out of their busy lives to help keep the School open and functioning, and make possible the many activities and events that happen each year.

2025 was a record year for such generosity, with approximately 1,600 hours of time contributed!



Volunteers contribute in big and small ways – at work parties and fundraising events. They mow grass and maintain the Schoolyard, open and close the School gate, tend to the Community Garden, Museum/Archives, shop for supplies, fix things, install things, clean things. A big heartfelt thank you to those of you who show up and help out!

Port Costa Museum & Archives Project Update

Since 2019 volunteers have been collecting and archiving pieces of Port Costa history here at the Port Costa Museum at the School. We have been actively collecting and cataloging artifacts, documents, news articles, photographs, and oral history interviews. Our mission is to keep Port Costa's history safe and accessible for the benefit of current and future generations.

This past year we have welcomed 3 volunteers who are donating their time to make our Museum and Archives more accessible and enjoyable. For this newsletter, each wrote a piece as a glimpse into our museum's archives – here's their report:

Left to Right: Azalea Beck, Aidan Behrendt, and Sam Vincent

Port Costa Recycles

Sam Vincent chose to highlight the Port Costa Recycles as an example of Port Costa spirit:

Sam Vincent has been a volunteer since March 2025 and a cornerstone in completing the uploading of our archives "finding aids" onto the searchable Online Archives of California website. He recently earned his Associate Degree in History at DVC and is transferring to Sacramento State University in the Fall.

Founded in 1980, Port Costa Recycles was one of the first community movements in Contra Costa County dedicated to recycling. Recognizing the build-up of waste in Port Costa and local landfills, residents Lewis Stewart and Ridge Greene organized the movement. Curbside pickup for residents and businesses occurred every other Saturday, involving up to seven volunteers and three hauling trucks. By 1993, Port Costa Recycles removed more than four tons of recyclable material per month. The money earned from this program (an estimated $23,000) went directly into the Port Costa Tree Fund, which maintained and planted trees throughout the community. Port Costa Recycles disbanded in 1994, as recycling shifted towards municipal management.

Dee Stewart, Monica Greene, and Ridge Greene ahead of their time with Port Costa Recycles

Theresa Jurik's Binders

Azzie Beck is our newest volunteer and has begun exploring our collection of Theresa Jurik's binders:

Azalea "Azzie" Beck is a recent winter addition to the museum, joining us while home on winter break from the University of St Andrews in Scotland, where she studies Medieval History and Archaeology.

I have just begun my look-through of Port Costa's archives; the news articles cut and pasted into dozens of binders immediately bring to life our tiny town and its incredibly colorful history. There are continuing threads from its history to our present: the attempts to refurbish and create a historical tourist center out of the town in the 1960s-80s; unending arguments over our sewage system, its federally mandated clean-up, and continuing concerns over its future operation.

As Port Costa fell from its economic hay-day in the early 20th century, the town fell into – at least on the national stage – disrepair. However, in 1963, Bill Rich's purchase of most of the business center bolstered a newly emerging tourist identity; by the end of the 1960s, there were 44 businesses operating out of the warehouse, and every merchant in town agreed to back the Bank of America's new credit card, making it the first community in the world to center a single card fully. By the 1980s, the town was called a 'delight' to visit, and as Elaine Dickinson wrote in 1983 for the Lesher News Service, it is "a town made for meandering, a place to stop and pet a kitten, [and] watch the ships sail by."

Port Costa Brick Works
Aidan Behrend chose to highlight the old Port Costa Brick Works as an archival example:

Aidan Behrend earned his Associates Degree in History from DVC and now works in an Architectural firm while coming to Port Costa every week and putting in long afternoons preserving the Oral History interviews we have in our archives.

When I began interning at the Museum in the Summer of last year, I had the opportunity to begin researching the old Port Costa Brick Works, a topic I've been curious about since I moved to Martinez as a kid. During my research, I was grateful to be given the chance to write an article on its history which was featured in the Crockett Signal.

Since then, I've been able to contribute to the Port Costa Archives by transferring DVD recordings of interviews of Port Costa residents done by Linda Clark, and Betty and Clayton Bailey in the 2000's to digital formats and transcribing these interviews. This work has culminated in my most recent project: creating a video using portions of these interviews, along with photos from the Brick Works. This film will be featured at the Museum, and will allow us to tell the story of the people who worked, were born and grew up at the Port Costa Brick Works in their own words.

The Brick Works 1913

VISIT THE MUSEUM @ the School !!!

You're invited to our Port Costa Museum Open House on **Wednesday, February 11th** and **Saturday, February 14**, 2026 - from 12:00 Noon to 3:00 PM. Explore our archives, tour the School, and learn more about Port Costa history. The Port Costa Museum is located at the Historic 1911 Port Costa School, 1 Plaza del Hambre, Port Costa, CA.

If you have questions Contact Suzanne Statler at PortCostaMuseum@gmail.com

Website: https://www.portcostaconservationsociety.org/museum

Upcoming Events

- 2nd Sunday at the School – Coffee and Conversation 10 am – 2 pm on January 11, February 8, March 8.
- Sunday, February 1, 5:30 pm: Volunteer Appreciation Dinner
- Wednesday, February 11 and Saturday, February 14, Noon to 3 pm - Open House at the Museum
- **TBD time and date:** Video screening of the 2025 Port Costa Talent Show
- Saturday March 28, Noon to 6 pm: the 3rd Grassroots Bluegrass Gathering

Come to Port Costa, CA

Grassroots Bluegrass Gathering

a Festival Fundraiser for the

Historic 1911 Port Costa School

1 Plaza del Hambre, Port Costa, CA

Saturday, March 28, 2026

12:00 Noon to 6 PM

LIVE BLUEGRASS MUSIC, Vendors, Food

ENTRY: $20.00 – Adults / $10.00 - age 12-21 / Free under 12

Advance Tickets: www.EventBrite.com