PORT COSTA CONSERVATION SOCIETY

May 2026 Newsletter

Chairman's Say

By Janet Wood

Wow! Have we been busy this Spring, and once again your Board has stepped up and facilitated a plethora of activities at the school.

We have a new roof! As soon as the rains stopped the roofing crew arrived. Within 6 days they were done! We all breathed a sigh of relief. Thanks as always to the Crockett Community Foundation for their grant and support that enabled this. We couldn't do it without them.

We also have a new sound system for the auditorium. Much better for monthly Bingo (which typically draws a big crowd), and any other activities in the auditorium. Thanks to Sarah Louise for bringing this suggestion to us.

Our new Website is being built and boy what an improvement that will be. Stay tuned for a site that will be easy to navigate, have more current and helpful information, and enable more processes – like joining the PCCS, or communicating with the board. Thanks in advance to Matthew Kane for this.

This summer for 2 months we are hosting Wild Ones Adventure Club, a daily summer nature and art camp for children ages 3-8. When 3 local moms – Ara Edsinger, Grace Dare, and Heather Posner – brought this request to us we couldn't have been happier. We are so excited about this! Kids at the school – what a concept!

We also have a couple of grant requests in the works – one for upgrading the access path in the schoolyard, and one for a long overdue kitchen remodel. More on this in the next newsletter.

I saved the best for last. Our own longtime Board member Anne Mann has been selected for recognition during Women's History Month by District 5 Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston. THIS IS A BIG DEAL. Anne's dedication as a Board Member, and ongoing efforts to preserve and restore the school have made a meaningful and lasting impact. Her leadership, volunteerism, and commitment to bringing people together through community events and programs truly reflect the spirit of service this award stands for. Hats off to you Anne, I'm so proud to stand by your side!

Looking forward to the sound of children in the building and play yard. Wishing a great summer to all of you who support our endeavors.

Summer Camp at the School

By Heather Posner

This summer the Port Costa School will host a summer camp for a group of 15 young children called Wild Ones Adventure Club. The camp will take place from June 26 to August 9, Monday through Friday. They will occupy a room in the school and have access to the schoolyard and ball field for their activities. PCCS is delighted to have children occupy the Port Costa School once again. Camp director Heather Posner shares this story:

Wild Ones Adventure Society began as a conversation between three educators who share a deep commitment to childhood, community, and the outdoors. Each of us has spent years working with young children in different settings, from nature-based preschools to classrooms and enrichment programs, but we found ourselves wanting something more. We wanted to create a space where children could experience summer the way we remember it: unhurried, exploratory, and connected to nature.

Wild Ones is designed as a place where children can climb trees, build forts, get muddy, and follow their curiosity. A typical day might include hiking the surrounding hills, creating nature-based art, engaging in collaborative building projects, or simply spending long stretches of time in imaginative play. We prioritize flexibility and responsiveness, allowing the interests of the group to shape the rhythm of the day.

Port Costa offers a setting that makes this kind of experience possible in a way that feels increasingly rare. The school site, with its open space and proximity to the natural landscape, provides a sense of freedom and possibility. There is a quietness and simplicity here that invites children to slow down, take risks, and engage more deeply with their surroundings.

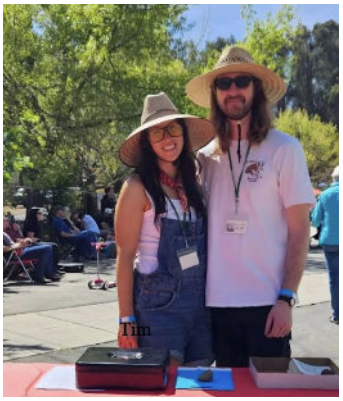
At its heart, Wild Ones is about giving children a summer that feels both joyful and meaningful. We hope they leave with stronger friendships, greater confidence, and a lasting connection to the outdoors.

Bluegrass Music Festival 2026

By Suzanne Statler

The Port Costa Bluegrass Festival fundraiser for the Port Costa School was held on Saturday, March 28th with a fabulous line-up of five Bay Area Bluegrass Bands and a score of PCCS Volunteers.

Manning Music Roots & Wings



Volunteer greeters at the gate

On a picture-perfect day, some of the greatest bluegrass favorites filled the air in the schoolyard. Our beverage booth kept everyone hydrated, the food booth served delicious Meatloaf and Vegan Sandwiches. Vendors had treasures to sell and the donors and contributors to our Raffle were so generous.

This year Kathleen Thomas' Raffle Quilt went to Sarah Louise and Tim Humann – who happen to now own Kathleen's family home!

A huge "Thank You" to the volunteers and supporters of this fun fundraiser (in no particular order)!

Tom List Hans List Jessica Steffen
Jan MacKenzie Paul Knight Vicky Oswald Tim Humann
Sage Rico Sophie List Janet Wood Sonya Wiseman Lina Baeza
Darryl Lavender Janet Wood Jennies White Sheller Clark Michelle Bow Spencer Sargent
Joel Gregor Marla Parada Bonnie Pannell Andy Lambert Loren Thomas Sam Vincent
Blake Finch Lili Finch Chad Mooney Rachel Mooney Meghan Boyle Olive Boyle Sarah Louise
Victoria Ryan Luke David Chen Laurie Beauchemin Tammy Dempsey Cersia Mitchel
Fresh Picked Bluegrass Band Manning Music Roots and Wings Yellow Wood String Band Bloomfield Bluegrass Band Mitch Polzak & Friends
Five Suns Brewing, PDQ Printing, Contra Costa Cinema – Martinez SePay Grove Olive Oils – Benicia Four Fools Winery – Rodeo Guitar Center – Concord
Lucia's Gourmet Sandwiches – Crockett. JJ's Compulsive Peddler, Warehouse Café, The Crystal Garden
Bull Valley Roadhouse – Port Costa Estate of Dee & Louis Stewart Estate of Betty & Clayton Bailey
Anne Mann Suzanne Statler Tricca Hodges Tim Humann Jason Brown Matthew Kane Fran Fay
Liz Holland Berryman Iliana Chen Robin Nazarian Aidan Behrendt Maureen Behrendt
Brett Chapman Deborah Smith Bastian Splendorio Greta List
Maggie List Michael Domagalski
Kramer Collins

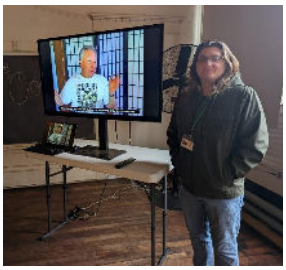
News from the Museum

By PCM Volunteers Sam Vincent, Aidan Behrendt and Suzanne Statler

The Port Costa Museum now has open hours on the 2nd Wednesday and 2nd Saturday each month.Visitors have enjoyed touring the schoolhouse, exploring the archives, viewing our thoughtfully researched documentary video, and simply spending time at the School.

An update on our Oral History Archives Project:
From 2006-2017, Linda Clark and Betty Bailey recorded 47 DVD interviews of current and former Port Costa residents. Thanks to advanced digitization and transcription software, we are beginning to create edited media to preserve the history of Port Costa.

Our first feature is *Stories from the Port Costa BrickWorks*. It's exciting to see Aidan Behrendt, volunteer and historic video editor, weaving together the rich stories and memories captured in Linda and Betty's interviews. Stop by and check it out!



If you have artifacts, documents or photographs from Port Costa, please consider donating or loaning them to the Museum to archive and display. Our archived materials are now searchable on the Online Archives of California – https://oac.cdlib.org/

PCCS Membership Report

By Michael Domagalski

Port Costa Conservation Society (PCCS) is a membership organization. Memberships are renewed annually at the beginning of each year. There are three levels of membership:

Full – full membership benefits include the right to vote in Board of Directors elections (must be 18 or older) as well as run for Board membership, and all members receive a subscription to the PCCS newsletter. Currently Full Membership dues are $25/year. As of 2026 there are 60 full members.

Supporting – member dues are $15/year; as of 2026 there are 25 supporting members.

Lifetime – those who have expressed a deeper level of support to PCCS became lifetime members with a $500 donation. A few of these 30 generous individuals date their support back to the founding of PCCS in 1979.

To become a member, go to the "support" section of the PCCS website: www.portcostaconservationsociety.org

Dance in Port Costa

By Joan Burke

We started dancing in Port Costa in the lodge of Bull Valley Roadhouse in July 2016. As Deedee and I were setting up a chalk board in front of the restaurant announcing the class a local couple approached. Laurie and Renee Beauchemin wondered what we were up to. I picked up a familiar accent. Beauchemin's had just moved from Springfield, Massachusetts. I grew up in Hingham, Massachusetts, about 60 miles away and here we were in Port Costa. Laurie professed a desire to take ballet but had always been too shy. I encouraged them both to come and check out the class.

The following Wednesday they both came to class. And thus began a lovely friendship. The class was open to everyone who worked at Bull Valley, and a few took advantage of it. Some of my former students joined the group. And so, we began.

For me, Port Costa marked the beginning of creating a new sort of dance class. No constraints, no rules, no mirrors, just dance; it was magical. I mixed ballet and modern techniques. The class was small, but people came consistently. We did ballet barre at the bar, the center floor work was generally modern leaning while our dances varied in style by design. To mark our first anniversary, we danced in the Port Costa 4th of July parade. Three dances, uphill to the Schoolhouse, it was our first time on the playground.

Every Wednesday as I dropped into Port Costa, I would gaze longingly at the Schoolhouse. I believe we all daydreamed about it. In January of 2020 I went inside for the first time to attend the Memorial service for Renee Beauchemin. I walked up the stairs and into the auditorium. I may have gasped. In that instant I fell in love with the space. I sat down and said out loud, we must dance here. For the next few months, we did some vigorous wondering about dancing at the Schoolhouse.

Fast forward to March and the whole world closed. The pandemic changed everything. I worried that dance as I had known it would simply disappear. During the pandemic, I danced alone. I kept my instrument tuned and ready just in case we might return to class one day.

When the pandemic came to an end, we began talking about dancing together again. But where, and then one day Laurie Beauchemin posted a picture of folks swing dancing in the Schoolhouse.

With Victoria's help we were allowed to bring our request to dance in the Schoolhouse to the PCCS Board. I gathered my dance crew together and made the presentation. The Board said yes and we started our class the following week. It was January and there was no heat, but we didn't care, we were dancing again.

The class in the Schoolhouse is structured the same way it was at Bull Valley but instead of the bar for barre we use the windowsill. The barre is like specific fine tuning. From the barre we go to center floor for larger movement, usually modern in style. During the third section of class we work on dances I create for the group.

The dances vary from pure ballet to super funky like the Pimps of Joytime piece we did for the talent show. During the winter we like to dance in the "green" room because it's warm and sunny. When we really want to move, we use the auditorium.

Some people call us the Ballet Ladies. We call ourselves the Port Costa Dance Collective. Sue Rohlicek and Janine Sanders have danced with me for close to thirty years. Deedee Kelly and Janis Descalzo for around fifteen years. Sue Rohlicek brought us Irma Bergeron. Irma and I studied with the same excellent dancer professor at different times together. Irma brought us Linda English. Janine found Teresa Roebuck, another former student of mine and brought her to the group. Laurie Beauchemin attends class too, whenever she can.

Are you interested in dance? *The class is open to new students every Monday morning from 10:30am-12pm.*

It's a welcoming group. We laugh a lot, have picnics a few times a year to celebrate our existence and we joyfully mop the floors. We thank our lucky stars we met Laurie and Renee Beauchemin.

2026 PCCS Volunteer Dinner

By Sheller Clark

The Port Costa Conservation Society (PCCS) volunteer appreciation dinner on the evening of February 1, 2026 was a beautiful reminder of what makes our little school so special: people showing up for one another.

In a small town like Port Costa, where so much depends on neighbors pitching in and shared care for community spaces, evenings like this feel especially meaningful. They remind us that the school is more than a historic building. It is a gathering place built and sustained by the generosity, creativity, and dedication of the people around it.

This year, nearly 50 volunteers gathered together to share a meal, catch up, laugh, and simply enjoy an evening in good company. It was especially meaningful to see attendance grow again this year, with even more volunteers joining us at the table.

That growing turnout is a reflection of the incredible community spirit here in the school and of the many people who generously give their time, energy, and talents to help keep our project vibrant.

Some volunteers have been involved with the school for decades, while others are just beginning to find their place within the PCCS community, but the evening brought everyone together with the same shared sense of care and connection.

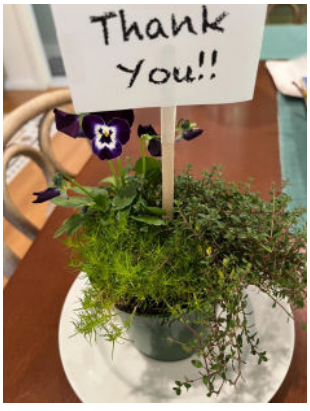
The evening itself felt thoughtful and welcoming from the moment guests arrived. Tables were set with china, linens, and serving pieces lovingly loaned by members and volunteers, creating a setting that felt elegant, warm, and full of Port Costa charm.

Dinner, prepared by the PCCS board, was every bit as memorable as the company. Guests chose between Tom's pork tenderloin with Dijon honey glaze or Vicky's amazing vegan meatloaf, both served with mashed potatoes in traditional and vegan options, roasted Brussels sprouts and cauliflower, a green salad tossed with champagne vinaigrette, and fresh French bread.

Throughout the meal, guests enjoyed wine, beer, sparkling apple cider, coffee, and tea, adding to the relaxed, festive atmosphere and giving the whole evening the feeling of a true shared feast. And then there was dessert: Anne Mann's light as air cream puffs, or *Vandbakkelser*, drizzled in rich dark chocolate, the perfect sweet finish to a wonderful meal.

One of the most special parts of the evening was seeing longtime volunteers seated beside new faces, stories being shared across generations of community members, friendships deepening, and new connections being made.

It was a lovely reminder that the PCCS continues to grow not just through preservation of the school, but through the people who choose to invest their time and hearts here.



As the evening came to a close, one thing was clear: the PCCS is not simply supported by volunteers. It is shaped and sustained by them.

Port Costa Stories: Hazel and Paul Tobin

By Michael Domagalski

Port Costa has had many colorful chapters in its long history. One began in the early 1960s when the town was in a dormant period with the busy shipping port and railroad ferry days long over, and the railroad station, nearby brick works, and town school all recently closed down. Bill Rich, a former truck driver and entrepreneur, saw potential and bought property "downtown", opening a number of shops and restaurants. This led to the discovery of Port Costa as a place of interest to visit.

One of the first to open a shop in the Warehouse were Hazel and Paul Tobin, my great aunt and uncle. Their shop, MimiPaul's Potpourri, was a mainstay there for 20 years. "Mimi" was Hazel's family nickname, which she liked as it reflected her French heritage and conveyed something of her personal style: warm, generous, expressive, and colorful. Hazel and Paul became close friends of Bill Rich, and happily adopted Port Costa as their home, first moving into a tiny cabin perched just above the railroad tracks (now gone), and later moving to their house on Canyon Lake Drive where they lived for the remainder of their lives.

In a 1971 article of the "Port Costa" magazine, published in town in the 70s, an article by neighbor Carlton Cordell described the couple: *"Easter Sunday found Hazel much as you would expect. Sitting in front of their shop in the Warehouse with an "Easter bonnet" befitting only royalty. A multitude of roses piled high upon her hair which had already been done up with a giant bun on top. It was most elegant. Now Paul wandered around with the same billed cap that he always wears. Passing them each day is a trip in itself. Paul will always say, "How are you, neighbor?" and Hazel in her most elegant voice will say "Hello Carl! How are Toni and the children?" I say "just fine … and how are you" and her answer always is "Just Wonderful!". They are fantastically friendly, smiling people. Hazel is 65 and bounces around bubbling every moment like a teenager who is seeing the world for the first time! Of all the places in the world they have traveled, Port Costa is the place they like the best."*

Hazel and Paul met and married in midlife in Tracy CA. Hazel had been widowed early and raised two daughters as a single mother, running a successful flower shop and later with Paul fixing and renting many small properties. She married Paul just after World War II and once her daughters were launched, his earlier career as a merchant marine led to their plan to hop freighters and happily circle the globe together. They booked passage this way for over a decade, traveling to China, the South Pacific, Brazil, and Africa, among other places.

Along the way, they became antique collectors of all manner of unusual "finds", many of which they expertly restored and found their way into their homes, and later into MimiPaul's Potpourri. My sister Victoria Ryan and I loved to visit their home in Tracy; it was full to the brim with fascinating and exotic objects. They kept canaries and parakeets in an aviary built right next to their house. All this was a wonderland for a young person, and to us she was always the aunt with a magic touch, with Paul as a steady partner by her side. When she said "Just Wonderful!" to Carlton Cordell, a phrase we all heard many times, she was expressing how she lived every day of her life, and you felt lucky to be around her.

Hazel's specialty was doll restoration and hat making. She could make charming dolls and hats out of just about anything at hand. She became known for her cute handmade "sock monkeys" made out of stuffed white athletic socks.

A collection of these was given to the Port Costa Museum and were featured in a recent issue of the Crockett Signal. She made one each, a girl and a boy monkey, for Victoria and me when we were little kids, which we treasured.

Once established here, Hazel and Paul drew many of our family here over the years with their enthusiasm and love for Port Costa. This included my parents Hank and Peggy Domagalski who bought the house on Prospect Ave.; my uncle John and his family who owned the Bull Valley Inn restaurant for years and had a home on Canyon Lake Drive, and my grandmother Hazel Ryan who lived in town for several years and supplied both the Bull Valley Inn and Warehouse Cafe with her excellent pies and desserts.

Hazel and Paul Tobin were essential in the start of Port Costa's next chapter in the 1960s as a place of interest to visit with unique shops and restaurants, and with its remarkable history. At one time there were shops throughout the Warehouse up into the second floor. There are fewer now, but the charm of Port Costa's downtown, housed in original buildings from the 19th century, continues today, and we feel still carries a little of Hazel and Paul's magic.

Upcoming Events

- Monday, May 18: Green Cleanup in the ball field
- Monday, May 18, June 15, July 20, and August 17: PCCS Board meetings in School community room
- Saturday, May 23: Townwide Yard Sale. PCCS is making the schoolyard available for vendor and food booths; the ball field will be open for parking
- Saturday, May 30: Port Costa Talent Show *THE MOVIE* Premiere 6:00 – 8:30 PM in the School auditorium
- Tuesday, June 9: Bingo in the School auditorium
- Wednesday, June 10 and Saturday, June 13: Port Costa Museum Open House at the School
- Sunday, June 14, July 12, and August 9: 2nd Sunday at the School – Coffee & Conversation 10 am – 2 pm in the community room
- Saturday, July 4: PCCS is making the schoolyard available for a townwide barbecue and potluck
- Tuesday July 14: Bingo in the School auditorium
- Tuesday August 11: Bingo in the School auditorium

PCCS Board of Directors
Chairperson: Janet Wood • Vice Chairperson: Suzanne Statler • Secretary: Michael Domagalski
Treasurer: Anne Mann • Financial Secretary: Sheller Clark

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