

## End of an era for longtime family-owned Compton's Market

East Sacramento store to retain name, employees, offerings under new ownership

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Marty Relles presents  
'Janey Way Memories'  
See page 5

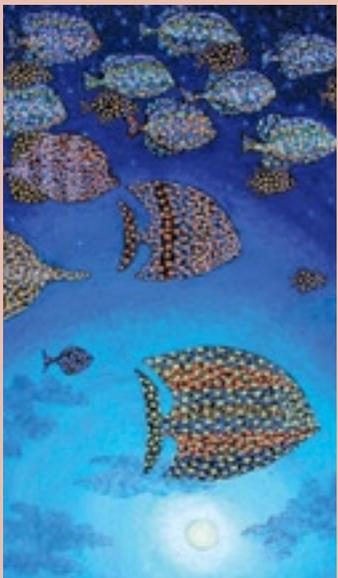
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From film crew to Piatti's chef

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Local artist brings his world to ours

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# Season to be sharing



East Sacramento residents share memories of the holidays

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# Season's Greetings: See special holiday insert How the season changes Sacramento

By **RYAN ROSE**  
East Sacramento News Editor  
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It's chilly out, and temperatures have reached record lows. At dusk, as the malls and shopping centers fill, the streets of Sacramento are bare and empty – residents scurry about to fireplaces, blankets and warmth. The sun, too, seems timid in the winter weather, dipping below the horizon earlier each day. Sometimes gray, often freezing, the region has undergone its winter transformation, slowly becoming a refrigerator that chills its warm-weather-loving denizens to the bone.

Yet, this season offers a space and time for connection and interaction; bundled-up for warmth and huddled together around heater vents, we are all more likely to stay inside than go out, spending more time socializing with friends and family members. As noted author (and one-time Sacramento news reporter) Mark Twain

once said, "The Xmas holidays have this high value: that they remind Forgetters of the Forgotten, & repair damaged relationships."

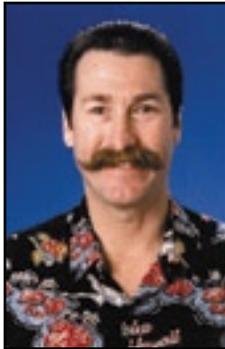
Twain was as correct then as he is now: The holidays are a prime opportunity (if not an excuse) to connect with those around us.

In an effort to drum-up some Christmas cheer in the midst of these cold days, the Valley Community Newspaper group has developed a special "Holiday Greetings" section featuring members of the community wishing well their fellow Sacramentans. This special eight-page insert can be found in the middle of this paper.

In that "season's greetings" spirit, allow me to wish all of you readers out there a very special (and safe) holiday season; we here hope that all of you receive those things that are the most important: peace, love and goodwill. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy Holidays.

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# Spacious Crocker Art Museum expansion slated to open in 10 months

By **SUSAN LAIRD**  
East Sacramento News Writer  
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It is said that great cities have great museums. If that is so, one might also postulate that great communities have great museums. The Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, as the first art museum established in the Western U.S., is greater than the sum of its parts. It is both a great city museum and a great regional museum.

A \$100 million expansion project, slated for completion next October, will permanently establish the Crocker as a museum of national significance for generations to come. A brilliantly conceived "classic contemporary" structure by the late architect Charles Gwathmey, the expansion will improve visitor amenities, enhance museum operations and provide new resources for collections care. The project also ensures that the Crocker Art Museum, founded in 1885, will enjoy another 125 years of inspiration and education.

The numbers are impressive. The new Crocker expansion adds some 125,000 square feet to the existing museum. The structure will contain: 8,200 square feet of glass, in the form

of windows that feature views that highlight the beauty of the original Crocker and the natural beauty of Sacramento's many trees. The exterior will be covered by 4,000 aluminum panels and 4,500 zinc panels. Underlying it all at the foundation, some 320 auger-cast piles were driven 60 feet deep to support the three-story structure.

Spacious new galleries already have 15 skylights specially designed to let in natural light – but without its destructive effects.

There is 12,000 square feet of exhibition space to display works of art.

"Not only will we have the ability to host some of the larger traveling art exhibits, we will be able to display some of the more massive works of art that were originally intended for display in grand homes or castles," said Kathleen Richards, marketing communications coordinator for the Crocker. "These pieces can be very tall. The new expansion has spaces where these art works will be able to be seen and appreciated."

A 7,000-square-foot open air courtyard at the new museum entrance will allow the Crocker to host more

than 1,200 people at outdoor events. The design of the courtyard allows visitors to enjoy and appreciate the architectural styles of both structures. A beautiful two-story atrium will have the capability of seating 400 for dinners. There is a 250-seat auditorium for presentations and educational events. There is handicapped access throughout. And the new facilities will be available for special events, making Sacramento now capable of hosting some national cultural events.

"All of us at the Crocker are very excited to serve our com-

munity in ways that literally weren't possible before and to be an even more integral part of civic life in Sacramento and the region," said Lial Jones, museum director.

"This is an exhilarating time for the city of Sacramento, and the Crocker Art Museum's expansion exemplifies the changes taking place," said Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson. "The museum is vital to the region's cultural and economic development, and the new Crocker is an important icon for Sacramento's ongoing emer-

See Crocker, page 5



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Renderings courtesy of the Crocker Art Museum

A classic contemporary expansion of the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento will be completed in October of 2010.

## Crocker: The opening is planned for Oct. 10

Continued from page 3

gence as a cultural destination and a world-class city.”

### The new Crocker

There will be more to the Crocker’s expansion than the 14,000 cubic yards of concrete and 1,400 tons of steel that make up its infrastructure.

“This will be one of the largest venues in Sacramento, if not the largest,” Richards said. “Hospitals and museums are the most expensive structures to build, due to the massive amount of infrastructure that is required. The building has to be able to withstand having many people visit it every day, year after year. The walls have to be able to bear the weight of heavy artwork. There has to be climate control and light control to preserve the art, and so on.”

Visitors will be able to walk up to windows on the first floor that look into the conservation area. It will be an opportunity for everyone, from school children to adults, to learn about the science of preserving art.

“Conservation is a very interesting field,” Richards said. “You have to have a master’s degree in chemistry and a master’s degree in art. The conservation center will enable us to provide better collections care and restoration, as well as education.”

The museum staff will have something they have never had before: ample modern office space. Located on the third floor, the architect’s design provides each worker with desk

space and personal space, while opening the larger space to the eye.

The opening of the new facility is planned for Oct. 10. The Crocker plans a series of special exhibitions that will feature highlights of the museum’s permanent collection. Many pieces have never been displayed to the public before.

The Crocker’s expansion is supported by a \$100 million capital campaign. More than \$90 million has been raised to date. The campaign has received generous donations of \$1 million or more. The new wing of the museum will be named the Teel Family Pavilion in recognition of a lead gift from the Joyce and Jim Teel Family Foundation. Building on this success, the museum is launching a broad-based fundraising and member campaign.

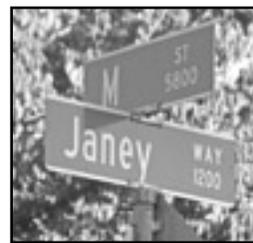
### Crocker Art

The Crocker Art Museum is located at 216 O Street in downtown Sacramento. Admission is \$6 for adults, \$4 for seniors 65 and better, \$3 for students with a valid ID and free for children ages six and under. Thanks to a generous grant from Bank of America, admission is free on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday, with extended hours on first and third Thursdays until 9 p.m.

For more information about the Crocker, call (916) 808-7000 or visit [www.crockerart-museum.org](http://www.crockerart-museum.org).

## Janey Way Memories



# Christmas Tree wars



By **MARTY RELLES**  
East Sacramento News Columnist  
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In Hollywood, they had “Star Wars.” In Los Angeles, they have gang wars. On Janey Way, when I was growing up in the 1950s, we had a Christmas tree war. This is the story of that epic neighborhood conflict.

The Christmas season was always special on Janey Way. The priests festooned Saint Mary’s Church with decorations. The sound of Christmas carols rang out from the church tower. All the neighbors had cookies and candies for the kids to eat. Everyone looked forward to Christmas vacation. Then after Christmas day when the trees were taken down and dumped in the street for pick-up by the yard waste truck, the Janey Way kids picked them up and dragged them over to the two vacant lots in the middle of Janey Way. There we constructed a splendid Christmas tree fort. The fort usually measured 12 feet long, by 4 feet wide, by 5 feet high. We used the fort as a place to hang out and just get away from the hustle and bustle of the season. One Christmas, however, there seemed to be a shortage of usable trees in the neighborhood. What to do?

Someone had an idea. The 58th Street kids had built their fort on the grassy entrance to the National Guard Armory at 58th and M streets. “Let’s go over there at night and take their trees.” So, late that night, by cover of darkness, we crept across the armory parking lot. We climbed over the gate at the 58th Street entrance, and one by one, took all the trees making up that fort. Then we hauled them back and used them to significantly improve our fort. When the 58th Street kids went to their fort the next morning, the structure had disappeared as if by magic. To the best of my knowledge, they never figured out where the trees went.

That success led us to try yet another Christmas tree caper. “Let’s take the trees from the O Street gang’s fort.” They were set up in Bob Pesce’s backyard. That night, we walked over to N Street, then up Mike Pesce’s (Bob’s cousin) driveway, over the fence and into Bob’s backyard. One by one we confiscated those trees until, all of a sudden, the backyard light came on and out of the house stormed Bob and his brother Eddy. Naturally, we fled with all due haste.

The next day we met at our fort to decide what to do next. As we met, we heard a great roar coming down the block. “What’s that?” someone yelled. We rushed outside the fort to find the O Street gang standing in the vacant lot yelling angrily about the theft of their Christmas trees and threatening violence. Once the uproar calmed down, we proposed a powwow to settle the matter. After some discussion, we reached an agreement. The Janey Way gang returned the stolen trees to the O Street gang. And the O Street gang would not take any trees from Janey Way.

So ended the great Christmas tree war. In the end, no blood was spilled. Both gangs retained their honor. Life returned to normal on the block, and the Christmas tree war went down in the annals of history as another unforgettable Janey Way memory.

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# East Sacramento residents recall some of their fondest Christmas memories

By LANCE ARMSTRONG  
East Sacramento News Writer  
lance@valcomnews.com

For many people in East Sacramento, Christmas is one of the most anticipated days of the year. And with this being so, some local residents are often eager to share their most memorable stories related to this annual end of the year holiday.

Iris Taggart, 83, said that despite growing up during the Depression, her mother made sure that her family always had an enjoyable Christmas.

"When I was growing up, it was during the Depression and we had very little money, but we never felt poor at all," Iris said. "We hung our stockings over the chairs and we had big, long cotton stockings to keep our legs warm back in Iowa. We never worried about toys. We got oranges, we got apples, we got real things to eat. I lost my dad when I was 7 years old and my mother was raising two little girls out on a 350-acre farm during the Depression. Somehow she scrapped up enough money to buy me a little doll that sucked its bottle and wet its pants. That's one of the nicest things I ever had and I know my mother had to scrape big time to be able to buy that little doll."

Later in her life, Iris married Robert Taggart, a World War II veteran who was in-

strumental in the post-war Berlin Airlift, which delivered food and other vital necessities to the people of West Berlin.

Iris said that in addition to spending memorable Christmases in Germany, she also celebrated Christmas in Japan.

"We had three children when we lived in Japan and we would take the train up to Mount Fuji and stay overnight and spend our Christmases up there," Iris said. "It was a beautiful, beautiful time for us. The kids were small and they loved going on the train and we really enjoyed our time there."

### A special time of year

Rosie Walcott, a native of Sacramento, has many memories of Christmas in the capital city.

"We lived on 24th Street, between K and L (streets) and my mother died when I was about a year and a half old," Walcott said. "We lived in a house with Spanish architecture and a big front window upstairs and I remember my sister, who was four years older than I am, trying to convince me that Santa (was real). I wasn't buying it, because I was just a little too old for that. I was probably about 5 or 6 years old at the time."

Walcott said that later in her life when she had her



East Sacramento News Photo/Lance Armstrong  
Terry and Penny Kastanis show off one of their all-time favorite Christmas albums, a 1953, 4-record set, called "Christmas with Arthur Godfrey and All the Little Godfreys." The East Sacramento couple has been celebrating Christmas together since 1961.

own family, she enjoyed savoring the Christmas present opening experience.

"You know how kids will just tear things apart (when opening gifts)?" Walcott asked. "Well, we did it one gift at a time and we enjoyed whatever that child was opening. We all enjoyed that, but of course it took hours to finish opening the gifts."

Penny Kastanis, who grew up in the Fabulous Forties neighborhood, said that Christmas was a much simpler holiday during her childhood.

"You maybe had a little bit of decorations around the window and then you had a wreath on the door," Kastanis said. "If you happened to have a Christmas tree in your yard, then you might decorate that. Now people are spending a lot of money to decorate. Also, I remember my mother, she used to make Greek cookies and we would put them on a paper plate and wrap them up with some colored cellophane and we would put a bow on them and take them to the neighbors. That was it, so it was

very simple and it was easy. Ours was all for a religious holiday, so we did not have the kinds of (heavy decorations and extravagancies) that people are doing in today's world. Ours was much, much different."

Kastanis, 73, said that gift giving during her childhood was also very simple.

"What I remember about Christmas is (receiving) flannel pajamas, new underwear and new socks and maybe one toy type of thing, either a

See Memories, page 6

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East Sacramento News Photo/Lance Armstrong

Jonathan Godbout, a 4-year-old resident of East Sacramento, shows off his favorite Christmas present: a remote control dinosaur named Spike.



East Sacramento News Photo/Lance Armstrong

East Sacramento resident Ryan Malhoski has been fond of Christmas lights and displays in the Fabulous Forties neighborhood since his childhood.

## Memories: 'To see all the lights in the Fab Forties was a fun thing'

Continued from page 5

game or a doll," Kastanis said. "Oh, yeah, and I would also receive a book every year and I would carry it around with me and read to anyone who would listen. I received my favorite gift in about 1946, while I was attending David Lubin Elementary School. It was a Madame Alexander doll that had a gown on. The top was pink, the bottom was pink and it had lace over it. And she had curly hair with a pink bow and it stood about 18 inches tall."

### A gift like no other

Unlike many children who receive gifts on Christmas and lose interest in their gifts by the following year, just this month, 4-year-old Jonathan Godbout was playing in his East Sacramento front yard with a gift that his parents gave him last Dec. 25.

"His name is Spike (the Ultra Dinosaur)," Jonathan said.

Jonathan's father, Larry Godbout, said that the 27-inch-tall, remote control dinosaur that walks, stands on its hind legs, growls, snorts and lights up remains his son's favorite toy.

Larry, who served as a Marine in the Iraq war, said that he also had a favorite Christmas gift during his childhood.

"I received a Castle Gray-skull (play set)," Larry said.

"It was an old (early 1980s) He-Man (action figure) castle thing. That was probably the best toy I ever got. It was like the big expensive toy at the time. I wanted it really, really bad and it showed up on Christmas morning. I never dreamed that I was going to be able to get something like that, so it was definitely very exciting."

Ryan Malhoski, who said that his favorite childhood Christmas gift was a K'NEX roller coaster set, said that prior to moving to East Sacramento, he would often leave his Carmichael

home during Christmastime to tour the highly decorated Fabulous Forties neighborhood.

"Just coming out (during Christmastime) and driving to see all the lights in the Fab Forties was a fun thing to do as a kid," Malhoski said.

### Winter lights

Holly Murphy and her family are also fans of the many Christmas lights and displays on houses and in front yards in East Sacramento, as well as Christmastime, in general.

"We celebrate the Christmas holiday in our home,

but we don't put Christmas lights on our own home," Murphy said. "We would if we were Christians, but we're not. We celebrate Hanukkah, however, we love the Christmas season and our kids love the Christmas season, as well. We celebrate Christmas with all of our friends and enjoy it. And we probably, more than anyone we know, enjoy cruising constantly to see the lights on 46th Street and the lights on 53rd (Street), around S and T (streets). Our kids really look forward to it."

Barry Rivlin said that he likes Christmas because it draws families together.

"It's a time to get the family together," Rivlin said. "I think it's, as opposed to religious, more of a family event. That way you don't have to be Christian in order to get into the spirit of it. It's one of the holidays that gets the family together."

But for whatever reason one celebrates Christmas, one thing is for certain and that is that the holiday continues to be one of the most popular days of the year – one that is full of good cheer and plenty of memories.

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Know your neighbor

# An end of an era for longtime family-owned Compton's Market

By LANCE ARMSTRONG  
East Sacramento News Writer  
lance@valcomnews.com

Sacramento's Dave and Mike Compton have sold the last of their family's chain of locally-owned grocery stores, known as Compton's Markets.

The final link in this chain, the East Sacramento store at 4055 McKinley Blvd., will officially change hands during the first or second week of December.

But fortunately for the neighborhood, the store's new owners, Pam and Sunil Hans, have vowed to maintain the store's name, employees and overall offerings that have made this store a community treasure.

Pam, Dave said, will head the operations of the store, while Sunil will maintain his high level position with the 7UP Bottling Co.

Although many customers are disappointed with the sale of the business, Dave assures the public that very few notable changes will be made to the store.

Additionally, Dave, 60, said that his brother, who is 57, plans to assist the new owners as an advisor in helping them understand what type of operations work best in this neighborhood store.

### Building a business

The McKinley Boulevard store, which opened in about 1973, was once among eight Compton Market's

in the Sacramento area. The first of these markets – the 2703 24th St. store, which is now known as the Curtis Park Market – opened in 1957.

The stores were originally owned and operated by Dave and Mike's father, Bill Compton, and their uncles, Loy and Lou Compton.

Bill, who passed away a little more than a year ago and was the last of the surviving original owners of the markets, gifted his sons the 24th Street and McKinley Boulevard stores upon his retirement.

Dave recently met with the East Sacramento News to discuss the sale of the East Sacramento store, as well as the history of his family's longtime grocery venture in the capital city.

Sitting behind his desk, wearing a blue Polo sweater and flashing the same friendly smile that has greeted thousands of patrons of his store throughout the years, Dave said that he felt the timing was right to sell the store.

"I'm 60 and I've been doing this since 1966, so that's about 45 years, so it's time to try something new," said Dave, a 1967 graduate of Bella Vista High School in Fair Oaks. "My brother and I had been kicking around the idea of selling this store for the last three years. We both knew that we were getting toward the ends of our careers and neither one of us wanted our kids to be in the grocery business, so we discouraged that and we told



East Sacramento News Photo/Lance Armstrong  
Dave Compton stands in front of Compton's Market at 4055 McKinley Blvd. in East Sacramento. The longtime popular neighborhood market was recently sold by Dave Compton and his brother, Mike Compton.

them to go to college. My dad used to say, 'I don't think the store will be around when your kids are grown up.' I'm sure my dad is smiling from on high that we got to get out."

Despite his upbeat attitude regarding the sale of the store, Dave, who plans on becoming a part-time Weight Watchers representative, said that he will strongly miss his many loyal customers.

"I'm really going to miss the people who I had a chance to get to know throughout the years," Dave said.

"We're on a first name basis with most of the people who come into the store. I have a lot of casual acquaintances and a lot of good friends (who are Compton's customers), so working with the public is the part I'm going to miss the most. That's always been my sort of forte to just say, 'Hi, how are you doing?' and to learn something about their families. I've always been fairly outgoing when it comes to that. I'm just really happy to have had

See Compton's, page 9

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# Compton's: 'I never had a day that I didn't want to come to work'

Continued from page 8

an opportunity to do that and I'm going to miss that a lot."

## Changing hands

Many customers have expressed their gratitude for the East Sacramento store and their disappointment with its recent sale.

Louisa R. Vessell, who lives less than a mile from the store, said that she was surprised to learn of the sale of the store and called the store upon learning the news.

"I was really saddened when I heard the news (about the sale of the store) and I immediately called the store and talked to Dave and asked, 'Why?' Vessell said.

Jeanette Ashton, 92, who also lives nearby the store, said that she has been shopping at Compton's in East Sacramento since the year that it opened.

"I have been coming here since April 1965 when this was a Stop-N-Shop store," Ashton said. "(Compton's) has been really handy for me for many years. You can get anything you want here. You don't have to go all over. Boy, I'll miss the (Compton family).

They're very accommodating. They are very good, very friendly and they call you by your first name."

Another noteworthy patron of Compton's is Paul Guidera, who Dave said often purchases flowers from the store to place on the East

Lawn Cemetery grave of his late wife, Anita.

In addition to the store's many dedicated customers, Dave said that Compton's stores have had a variety of long-term employees, including Royal Clark, who managed the 45th and D streets store for about 20 years, Harry Nakamura, a produce worker for about 12 years and Bob Colby, who worked for about six years in the meat department in the 14th Street and Broadway store.

Another very notable employee, Elaine Davies, is enjoying the final days of her 42-year career working in Compton's Markets.

"I started working for Compton's in 1967," Davies said. "At this time, there were a lot more independent grocery stores like Van's markets and Tom Thumb markets.

I started working at 14th (Street) and Broadway in a little office adjacent to the store. I originally worked for Bill Compton. Bill did not know a stranger. We would have a luncheon for employees and people would walk up and say, 'Man, you guys are having the best time of your lives' and the next thing you know, Bill would have them sitting down next to us and talking to us. He was just a very congenial man. In fact, all three of the brothers who started Compton's were just loved by everybody. It's just been a great time working here. It has been the wildest ride of my life and I never had a day that I didn't want to come to work."

## New era for Compton's

Being that Compton's Market is not closing, but is sim-



East Sacramento News Photo/Lance Armstrong

Dave Compton (right) prepares to hand a bag of groceries to a customer at Compton's Market in East Sacramento.

ply changing ownership, Dave invites the public to continue to shop at this longtime East Sacramento grocery store once the new ownership begins operating the store.

The store will continue to offer USDA choice

meats, a self-service deli and conventional and organic items in its produce, grocery and frozen foods sections.

For additional information about Compton's Market, call (916) 456-2443.

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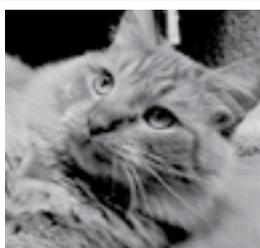
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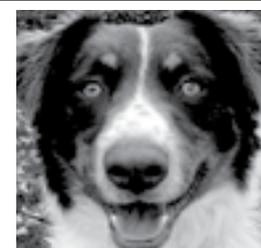


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You and your teen

# Surviving the holidays



By **STEVE DEBENEDETTI-EMANUEL**  
 East Sacramento News Family Columnist  
 steve@rivercitycounseling.com

Normally this space is reserved for advice for parents with teens; this week will be different. I'm speaking to adults who plan to spend the holidays with their parents and siblings and giving tips to help them survive and enjoy the holidays.

Recently, my client "Dave" has been worried about his yearly visit to Southern California. He and his wife and kids are spending Christmas with his parents and siblings and staying for a few days afterwards.

As Dave is a chef, the unspoken expectation is that he's going to prepare a lavish feast. And for the last eight years, he has. While others relax, he spends the entire day cooking, getting little help from anyone but his mother and wife. By the time the celebration starts, he's resentful, exhausted and in no mood to celebrate.

And others fulfill their roles. His brother socializes, doesn't even offer to help, and drinks too much. His sister snaps at everyone and leaves in a huff. His father tells loud, inappropriate jokes that make others uncomfortable.

Dave wants things to be different this year. He has already told his parents that he's taking the year off from cooking. He has suggested either a potluck or going to a restaurant. He has also made plans to take his wife and kids to Disneyland for a couple of days. He then plans to return to his parents' house for their last night before heading home.

Just as Dave is trying a new strategy this year, each of us has to figure out what to do differently, to increase the chance of enjoying the holidays with our families. Here are some thoughts to keep in mind as you prepare to go.

It's OK to break lifelong patterns of behavior. There's nothing like time spent with family for you to suddenly find yourself talking and acting like you did when you were a teenager living at home. When you realize you're doing this, gently remind yourself that you are now an adult, and as long as you aren't rude or inconsiderate, you are free to behave however you want.

Be aware that your siblings and parents are also likely to repeat their lifelong patterns. The brother who has always said mean things in order to knock you down will probably try to do the same this year. Remind yourself not to take his bait. Instead, take a deep breath and respond to him as calmly and kindly as possible. Eventually, he'll lose interest and pester others.

Despite the inevitable pressure to be together for EVERY MINUTE of your visit, take breaks from your family. Be it spending an evening with a friend, heading away overnight, or just taking a walk around the block after dinner, if you spend some time away from your family you're more likely to enjoy your time with them.

Regardless of what you plan to do differently, be aware that you will probably feel the pressure to act like you always have. If you stick to your guns and do what makes you (and your spouse and children) happy, rather than giving in and feeling badly afterwards, it's likely that you'll leave feeling satisfied and (almost) ready for next year.

*Steve DeBenedetti-Emanuel is a licensed marriage and family therapist based in the Sacramento area. Steve's columns appear periodically in the Valley Community Newspapers. Ask Steve your questions – e-mail him at [steve@rivercitycounseling.com](mailto:steve@rivercitycounseling.com).*

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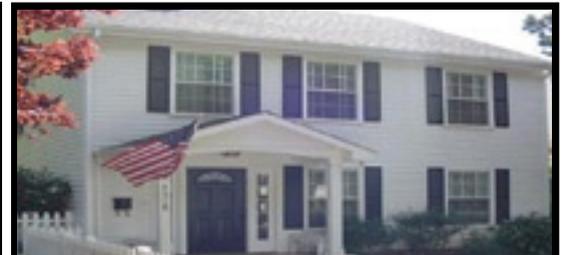
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# From film crew worker to Piatti's new executive chef

By ELIZABETH KALFSBEEK  
East Sacramento News Writer  
reporter@valcomnews.com

Piatti Restaurant and Catering is located at 571 Pavilions Lane in Sacramento. For more information, visit [piatti.com](http://piatti.com) or call (916) 649-8885 for reservations.

Ryan O'Malley graduated with a degree in film and video studies from the University of Michigan. So how did this self-taught cook become Piatti's executive chef in Arden Arcade?

Since the age of 16, O'Malley has worked various restaurant jobs from washing dishes to waiting tables. After college, he landed a job as a cook in a Mexican restaurant in Ann Arbor, Mich.

"The owner of the restaurant was open to my suggestions, and without any formal training I started experimenting there," O'Malley said. "I fell in love with cooking for cooking."

The chef moved to Los Angeles to put his film and video studies degree to work and spent four years as a freelance crew worker. He told himself that if he should ever switch careers, he would become a chef.

"As a parent you look and want the world to be a better place for your kid," O'Malley said. "With a love of cooking and a love of food, that was a way I saw I could make a difference in my son and family's life, and now in other people's lives."

## Switching stages

Through various twists and turns, O'Malley ended up in the Sacramento area and landed a position at La Provence in Roseville. Within six months, he worked his way up to lead cook at dinner.

Following his stint at La Provence, O'Malley went to Spataro in downtown Sacramento for a different experi-

ence, "where I was really introduced to Italian cooking."

O'Malley served as the sous chef at Hawks in Granite Bay and helped open The Grange restaurant at The Citizen Hotel in downtown Sacramento before landing at Piatti, located at 571 Pavilions Ln., in April 2009.

"The hallmark of what I do is simplicity," O'Malley said. "The thing with simplicity is the simpler it is, the more you have to nail it."

O'Malley believes in treating ingredients minimally, using their essence and letting the quality shine through. But don't confuse "simple" with "boring." The ingredients of Italian fare may not have a lot of complexity to them, but creating and refining the dishes is about technique.



East Sacramento News Photo/Elizabeth Kalfsbeek  
Hard at work: Ryan O'Malley is the executive chef at Piatti, located at 571 Pavilions Ln.

"If there's not a lot of stuff to hide behind, then everything has to be right on point," O'Malley said. "And that's one of the beautiful things about Italian food, is that it's focused on the ingredients."

## Going local in the kitchen

Piatti's dishes are designed around the seasons, O'Malley said, and he makes a point of buying as local as possible.

"When I took over, one dish that was almost always sold was the Scottish farmed salmon," said O'Malley. "I wanted to get away from that. Even if the fish was sustainably raised, flying it in from Scotland everyday isn't very sustainable. I look for items closer to home."

In accordance with traditional Italian cooking, O'Malley knows the concept of "locavore" goes beyond the latest trend. Europeans, he said, have been eating that way for centuries and the same way of thinking

has only recently become a hallmark of American cooking.

Europeans eat what's in the market, in town, that day, O'Malley said. There are no supermarkets per say, no one-stop shops.

"They seem to have a closer connection with the earth, the farmer, what's there and readily available," he said. "I think that's the way people should eat. It makes sense."

O'Malley knew when he became the executive chef that it would be hard to walk into a restaurant with a large staple of regulars and change things. His goal is for patrons – both regulars and new alike – to not only expect quality, well-prepared, flavorful food, but also have the confidence to order something new and find that the dish exceeds their expectations.

"Everyday when I walk through the kitchen doors I want to find a way to make the food better than I did the day before," said O'Malley. "I think it's that passion that truly fuels a good cook."

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# Local man helps bring Thanksgiving to the homeless

By **BENN HODAPP**  
East Sacramento News Writer  
benn@valcomnews.com

Madrid has a friend who works for Sacramento City Councilmember Rob Fong, who alerted Madrid to the homeless organization.

"I just thought it was the right thing to do," he said. "They are going through some tough times and they might not have the chance to have the restaurant experience."

The feast featured all the standard Thanksgiving fare: turkey, ham, stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie.

To explain the nature of the tough times these families are indeed facing, Benavides provided some information on the organization and its goals.

"The program is based on a new approach called 'Rapid Re-Housing' where families are quickly found homes of their own after leaving a shelter," she said. "We ask the families what area they would like to live in and what school district they would like to put their kids into and then we try to find vacant apartments in those areas for the families."

The program is funded by Lutheran Social Services, which recently received money to support it. According to Benavides, the Obama Administration is trying to expand the rapid re-housing program. She explained that there are approximately 18 programs nationwide that are working to

Call it a hand up, not a hand out.

Faith and Homeless Families is an organization that works to get homeless families into a home of their own. During the Thanksgiving Holiday week, some of the families involved in the Faith and Homeless Families program were invited to take part in a good old-fashioned Thanksgiving meal thanks to the generosity of a local restaurant owner.

Joey Madrid, owner of Hangar 17, opened up his restaurant's doors to some 40 homeless people who might not have had the chance to enjoy the holiday the way the rest of us do.

"He did such a wonderful thing for our families," said Nora Benavides, director of the organization. "It was very festive and the families were waited on hand and foot."

The idea to open up for the community stemmed from a tradition that Madrid used to take part in years ago.

"We used to do a friends and family Thanksgiving dinner at the restaurant every year," Madrid said. "The last year that we did it there weren't many people there, so I thought it would be nice to do something different."



East Sacramento News Photo/Ryan Rose

Hangar 17, located at 1630 S St., opened up its doors to some 40 homeless people who might not have had the chance to enjoy Thanksgiving.

get families without homes into their own places.

After a family leaves a homeless shelter they are evaluated and have a background check performed. Then they are matched with appropriate mentors who help them to find jobs and manage finances.

"Every family has unique challenges," Benavides said.

She spoke of a family with a child afflicted with Down syndrome. The fam-

ily was paired with a mentor who had experience working with special education children, and now the child and family are thriving. Another mentor is helping to build a resume so the father can hopefully find a full-time job.

The organization is working hard to grant a normal life to those without a home. Thanks to the generosity of Madrid, several families got to forget their hardships and enjoy some good food with family.

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# Local students get a magical preview of 'The Nutcracker'

By SUSAN LAIRD  
East Sacramento News Writer  
susan@valcomnews.com

Students at Hollywood Park and at Crocker Riverside elementary schools got an advanced peek at the "theatrical magic" of "The Nutcracker" when Ron Cunningham, artistic director of Sacramento Ballet, visited the schools on Nov. 30.

The hour-long presentation to second and third graders is something Cunningham, a Land Park resident, has been doing for the past 20 years. In addition to discovering some theatrical magic, the kids add some large, new words to their vocabularies and learn a little history.

"What's a choreographer?" Cunningham asked the second graders at Hollywood Park. A few hands went up, but no one guessed correctly.

"A choreographer is someone who makes up the dances," he explained. "In a ballet, the dancers don't just improvise on the stage. Someone has to teach them all the steps in the dance."

"The Nutcracker" was composed in Russia by Pyotr Illych Tchaikovsky some 150 years ago, Cunningham told the students.

"What was going on in Sacramento 150 years ago?" he asked the third graders at Crocker Riverside.

"The Gold Rush!" said one student.

"That is correct," Cunningham said. "Sacramento was a brand new, rough and tumble town back then. The people here were very poor, pioneering people for the most part. But Russia was a very elegant, sophisticated place at that time. People had beautiful homes, nice things to eat and beautiful clothes. That's where the story of 'The Nutcracker' takes place."

In addition to producing and creating the choreography for "The Nutcracker," Cunningham also plays a

key character in the ballet: Dr. Drosselmeyer.

"I have to play a really old character," he explained to the students. "I wear an eye patch and a tall top hat. I have to create a special 'face' and a special walk."

Giggles erupted from students as Cunningham "transformed" into Dr. Drosselmeyer before their eyes. The kids learned that a lot of work goes into each role in the production, whether one is a performer onstage, a choreographer, or a technical person working the lighting and special effects. Students were impressed.

"I liked how the choreographer in 'The Nutcracker' is also an actor," commented Natalie Leclerc, age 8. "He just doesn't sit around telling people what to do."

Cunningham went on to show students a few of the magic tricks that his character performs in the ballet, and how some of the special effects in the ballet are accomplished.

"Most magic tricks are actually very simple," he told the kids. "Remember, when you are doing a trick on stage, you need to divert the eye."

Students learned how Dr. Drosselmeyer is able to conjure up flowers from a cane, pull a giant candy cane from his top hat...and how he transforms a wooden nutcracker into a flesh-and-blood dancer. It was exciting and engaging for the students.

"I liked the magic stuff," said Collin Macias, age 7.

"I liked the part when he made his magic cane into flowers," said Rebecca De La Cruz, age 7. "It was a surprise because no one saw when he took the top off of his cane."

"My favorite part was when he pulled the big candy cane out of his hat," said Javarri McDaniel-Wily, age 8.

"I liked how he showed us his magic, because I watch plays and I've always wanted to know how they do that," said Maddie Haggard, age 9. "It will be a fun ballet."



East Sacramento News Photo/Ryan Rose

Students at Crocker Riverside Elementary Schools got an advanced peek at the "theatrical magic" of "The Nutcracker" when Land Park resident Ron Cunningham, artistic director of Sacramento Ballet, visited the schools on Nov. 30.

Students got to see the actual masks that are used for the central character and the Mouse King in the ballet. They learned how the actors see through the masks (not very well), and how hard it can be to keep one's mask in place while dancing.

"I really liked the cool costumes," said Carson Kaye, age 8. "I liked how the colors blended in (so the audience can't see where the actors look out)."

Cunningham explained the technical side of some of the special effects in "The Nutcracker," including the math calculations that are necessary to make a hot air balloon "fly" across the stage with two actors on board.

"It's exciting and cool to see," said Cesar Garcia, age 8. "He showed us the props and stuff that goes on behind the scenes."

"I didn't know how the balloon flew or how the magic box (containing the wooden nutcracker) worked before," said John Laugenour, age 8. "It's amazing how that works. I think everyone should see 'The Nutcracker.'"

The elaborate sets for "The Nutcracker" were designed in France and made in Russia. One special canvas that weighs hundreds of pounds involves a Christmas tree that Cunningham's char-

acter enchants. There is another special canvas that plays a key part in "weather effects" on stage.

"I liked how he showed us how the Christmas tree grew," said Lucie Scantlebury, age 9. "Everyone should come to see how much work goes into this."

"I liked how he showed us how they make it 'snow' on the stage," said Melissa Ng, age 7.

The students who attended Cunningham's presentation at both schools will be attending an upcoming performance of "The Nutcracker." There is tremendous excitement.

"They are so excited," said Suzanne Womack, who teaches second grade at Hollywood Park Elementary School. We've been earning money so they can all go to see "The Nutcracker."

"Each year the third grades attend the Nutcracker matinee performance, and Mr. Cunningham's presentation at our school prior to the trip truly enhances the experience for the children," said Sharon Sommer, who teaches third grade at Crocker Riverside. "We really consider it part of the field trip. He explains what happens behind the scenes so they have a special appreciation for what they are going to see. They get to see the special effects and learn how the scenery and props work, so that when we finally go to the ballet, the children are looking for those things and are

completely engaged throughout the performance."

Cunningham's production of "The Nutcracker" is one of Sacramento's most cherished holiday traditions. Over 200 costumed characters enthrall the audience to the majestic Tchaikovsky score played superbly by the Sacramento Philharmonic Orchestra. Magnificent dancing, sumptuous scenery, and spectacular choreography combine in festive celebration. The production includes nearly 500 children, from Teeny Tiny Mice to swirling Candy Canes, making it the largest cast of children in any "Nutcracker" in the world.

Whether it is sharing the magic of "The Nutcracker" with elementary school students, or teaching youngsters the steps in the actual ballet, this annual production is something Cunningham looks forward to every year. To him, it's all about the kids and the magic they bring to the stage.

"One of my great pleasures of the season is working with the beautiful children that make our 'Nutcracker' alive," he said. "Alive with energy and joy."

The Sacramento Ballet's 22nd season of Ron Cunningham's "The Nutcracker" opens on Dec. 11 and runs through Dec. 23 at the Sacramento Community Center Theater. For tickets, visit the box office or [www.tickets.com](http://www.tickets.com) or call (916) 808-5181.

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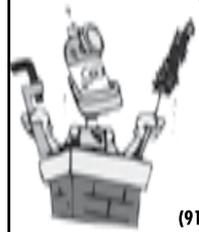
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Go to ask\_norma@spaineasy.com or call 916-457-1220. Two meetings: Dec. 16 at Oakmont High School in P33 at 6 p.m. and Dec. 17 at Border's on Fair Oaks Blvd at 6 p.m.

### Christmas services

Faith Presbyterian Church at 625 Florin Road welcomes you to its Christmas Services: Dec. 6, 13, 20 and 27 – Sunday Services, held at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Dec. 2, 9 and 16 (Wednesday) Advent Dinner at 6 p.m., followed by worship at 6:45 p.m. Christmas Eve service at 7 p.m. and 11 p.m.

### Winter Wonderland at Fairytale Town

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### Sacramento Opera Carolers

The Sacramento Opera Carolers will perform at Pavilions Shopping Center, 563 Pavilions Lane, Sacramento, CA 95825 on December 5, 12, and 19, 2009 from 1 to 3 p.m.; at The Fountains at Roseville, Roseville Parkway and Galleria Boulevard on December 20, 2009 from 3 to 5 p.m.; and the Town & Country Village, corner of Fulton and Marconi Avenues in Sacramento on December 6 and 13, 2009 from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. The Sacramento Opera Carolers are members of the Sacramento Opera Chorus.

## DECEMBER 17

### Latino Dance and Culture Group

Come dance to the beat of all types of Latin music! Featured DJ music and delicious Mexican food! Held at the Ethel Hart Community Center, 915 27th St., from 6:15-8:45 p.m. Suggested donation: \$3. For more information, call Barbara Alarcon 400-4514.

## DECEMBER 18-20

### Christmas celebration

Everyone is invited to enjoy St. Joseph Catholic Church's celebration of the birth of Jesus. This 45-minute non-denominational event is celebrated through the use of real animals and people in a "live nativity scene." Local bell ringers, musicians, and choirs add their talents to each performance. Dec. 18, 7 p.m.; Dec. 19, 7 p.m. and Dec. 20, 4:30 p.m. are the dates to mark on your calendars. St. Joseph's is located about 2 blocks north of the Freeport bridge on the west side of the river. The performances, lighted parking, and goodies after each performance are free. Merry Christmas. Although not required, non-perishable food items for the less fortunate in the area would be greatly appreciated.

## DECEMBER 20

### Christmas Concert

The Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation Choir invites you to our Christmas Concert Sunday, December 20, 2009, 7:00 p.m. at the Annunciation Church, Alhambra & F Street. A holiday reception will follow in the Hellenic Center

## DECEMBER 24

### Christmas Eve service

You are invited to experience God's love and peace – Christmas Eve Service, 6:00 p.m. Faith United Methodist Church, 3600 J Street, 452-7637

## DECEMBER 27

### River Park Blood Drive

The next River Park Blood Drive will take place on Sunday, December 27, 2009 from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at 5458 Carlson Drive across from the school. Coffee Donuts and BBQ.

### Computer Gardening Class

Class is 10:15 - 11:45 a.m. at 828 I St. Dig It! - A guide to gardening information on the Internet. Join us for this free class as we look at Web sites that provide information on plants, soils, climate and garden design. We will explore sources such as newsletters and weblogs, as well as information from plant and garden societies and educational and governmental sources. At the Central Library, 828 I Street. Free parking on Saturdays in the lots of Sacramento Public garages at Tenth & I streets and Tenth & L streets. To reserve a space, call 264-2920.

### All Saints music

Nine Lessons and Carols music presentation will begin at 4 p.m. at the All Saints Episcopal Church, 2076 Sutterville Rd. Scott Nelson conducts.

### Big band ball

Dancers are invited to bring noise-makers and their festive spirits to the Annual Pre-NYE Ball presented by Nor Cal Big Bands Preservation Society, Sunday, December 27, at the Sacramento Elks Lodge No. 6, 6446 Riverside Blvd. beginning at 1 p.m. The Dave Chelini (a favorite Sacramento accordionist) Plus his Sound Box magic plays from 1:00-2:00 p.m. with an array of standards for great dancing. From 2:00-5:00 p.m. a legendary bandleader and reed-man George Bruno leads his 13 members Big Band. Tickets (sold only at the door) are \$14 per person, \$12 per in groups of ten persons, and \$9. to the Society's Gold Card Holders. For more details, call 444-6138 (evenings & weekends),

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[ryanrose@valcomnews.com](mailto:ryanrose@valcomnews.com)

**JANUARY 5**

**Alzheimer's Support group**

Are you looking for someone to talk to – someone who understands what it is like to deal with Alzheimer's disease? Join an Alzheimer's Support group hosted by Carmichael Oaks Senior Living. Ongoing sessions provide families and caregivers guidance and training to assist them in caring for a person with the disease. Our program will offer tips, resources, and the ability to connect with fellow caregivers. The free event starts at 6 p.m. at Carmichael Oaks Senior Living, 8350 Fair Oaks Blvd. Information: Refreshments served. RSVP at 944-2323. For more information, visit [www.carmichaeloaks.com](http://www.carmichaeloaks.com).

monitors, televisions, desktop and notebook PCs, VCRs, stereo equipment, speakers, keyboards, mice, PDAs, digital cameras, zip drives, telephones, cell phones, printers, copiers, laser and multifunction scanners and fax machines. We cannot accept: Household appliances (i.e. refrigerators, washers/dryers, etc), furniture, hazardous household waste, including fluorescent light bulbs, paint, pesticides, used oil, cleaning supplies, tires, etc. If you need something picked up, or have additional questions, please contact Shawn D'Alesandro at 658-2701 ext. 12#.

**Senior Ball**

Hart Senior Center cordially invites people 50 and older to attend our semi-formal Senior Ball on Saturday, January 9 at 2 p.m. This event is sponsored by the U.C. Davis Health System with all proceeds benefitting the Ethel Hart Senior Center. Please join us for 3 hours of catered appetizers and desserts, 50's and 60's music, free Senior Ball portrait, ballroom dancing and much, much more. Tickets are limited. No door sales of tickets. No refunds. Tickets cost \$5. Event at Ethel Hart Senior Center, 915 27th St. Call 808-5462 for more information.

**Jensen Garden Workday Volunteers**

Friends of the Jensen Botanical Garden hold garden work days one Saturday of every month from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The next workday is Saturday, January 9, 2010. Bring work gloves, hand pruners and your lunch. Come join with other volunteers to keep the garden beautiful all year. Next workdays in 2010 are 2/6, 3/6, 4/10, 5/8, 6/5, 7/10, 8/7, 9/11, 10/9, 11/6, 12/4. The Jensen Garden is located at 8520 Fair Oaks Blvd. in Carmichael. For more info: Tracy Kerth (916) 485-5322 ex23 or e-mail [tracy@carmichaelpark.com](mailto:tracy@carmichaelpark.com).

**Falling seminar**

A four-hour seminar to educate seniors on how to avoid the dangers of falling while carrying out their day-to-day activities will be held on Saturday, Jan. 9, at the Belle Cooledge Community Center, 5699 South Land Park Drive. The South Land Park seminar, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., is one of six being presented during December and January at various locations in the Sacramento area by the City of Sacramento with the participation of Kaiser Permanente, according to Kim Met-

calf, who heads the city's 50+ Wellness Program. The seminars, entitled "Stand Up to Falls," are open without charge to seniors, who must make advance arrangements to attend by phoning Metcalf at 808-1593 or via e-mail, [fiftypluswellness@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:fiftypluswellness@cityofsacramento.org).



**JANUARY 9**

**Free Electronic-waste Collection Fundraiser**

Proceeds to benefit Kit Carson Middle School's 8th Grade G.A.T.E. Class. Students are planning a 4 day-three-night trip to Washington, D.C. Drop off on: Saturday, January 9, 2010, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Kit Carson Middle School parking lot, 5301 N St. You won't even need to get out of your car, we will unload for you! We will accept:

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Out and about

# From dreams to reality: How one local artist brings his world to ours

By **BENN HODAPP**  
East Sacramento News Writer  
benn@valcomnews.com

"I like to think that I'm walking down a dream path, taking pictures of what I see."

That is how local artist Mark Niemeyer describes his creations. His ability to create these dreamlike scenarios has just always been there, he said.

"My interest in art wasn't taught," he said. "It just poured out of me."

Niemeyer, a native of Nebraska, moved to northern California 25 years ago. "Friends told me that my art was strange enough to sell in California," he chuckled.

His first stop was Marysville and then Woodland. He realized quickly that if he was going to make a dent in the art world that he needed to make his way to Sacramento. Within a month of moving here, he had some works in a gallery.

Many of his paintings are surrealistic, taking real-life images and warping them in some way.

"I'm proud that I don't get stuck on one form," he said. "I'm doing a series of birds right now and when I'm done with that I'll move on to something else."

Along with his many works that include people and animals, Niemeyer has developed a fascination with parts of California that Nebraska simply didn't have to offer.

"Being in Nebraska you don't really see any rocks," he said.

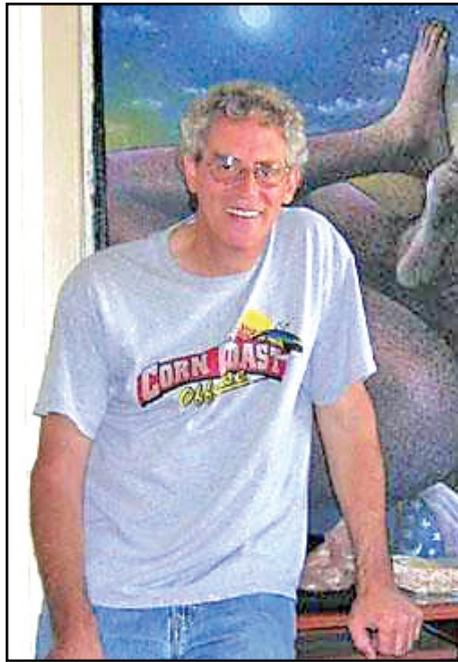


Photo courtesy Mark Niemeyer  
Artist Mark Niemeyer, a native of Nebraska, moved to northern California 25 years ago.

This created his motivation to start doing some landscape paintings of rock formations in the area. Also not present in Nebraska is a certain type of tree.

"I did a series of paintings called 'Midtown Palms' and ended up with about 10 or 12 of them," he said. "Those sold pretty well, actually. I sold half of them."

Nearly all of his paintings are done using oil pastels, which he refers to as "adult crayons." He discovered them nearly 30 years ago and he remains an avid user.

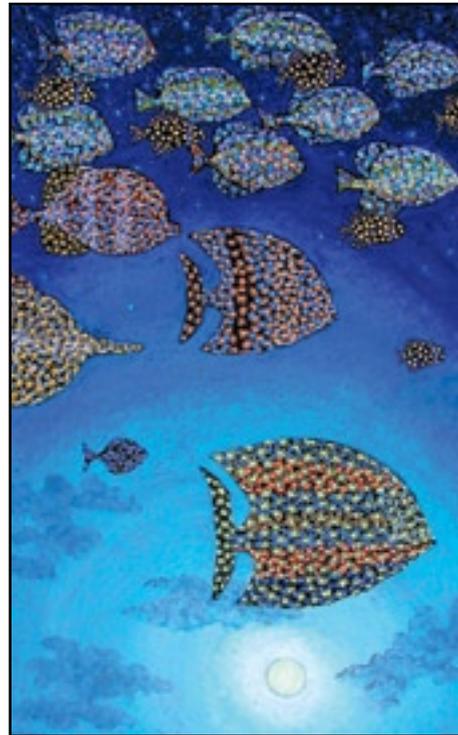


Photo courtesy Mark Niemeyer  
This piece is part of Mark Niemeyer's Fishboy and Flowergirl series.

### Prominently displayed

Niemeyer's works can be seen all over the Sacramento area. He has pieces in The Supper Club on Del Paso Boulevard; Crepeville at 18th and L streets; Burgers and Brew at 15th and R streets; and Matteo's at Arden Way and Fair Oaks Boulevard.

As far as how he was able to get his art featured at these locations, he said he was largely in the right place at the right time.

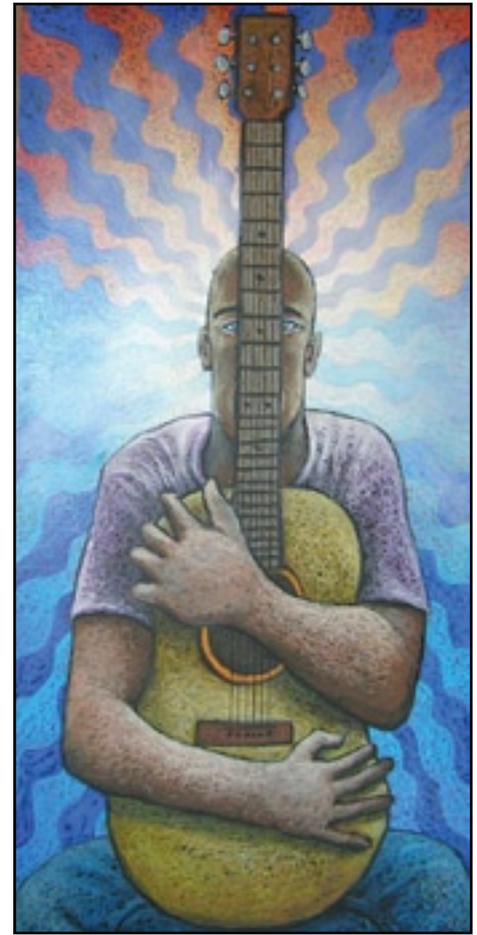


Photo courtesy Mark Niemeyer  
This piece is Mark Niemeyer's "Hiding behind his music."

Niemeyer works at The Supper Club as a cook. He describes himself as "a chopping and cutting machine" and he assists the chefs in prep-

See Artist, page 23



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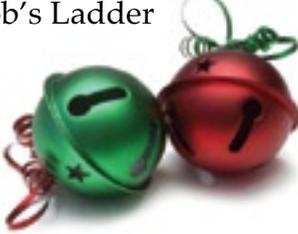
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# Artist: 'I always try to put some humor in my art, especially in the titles'

Continued from page 22

ation for their creations. The owners, Matt and Yvette Woolston, took notice of his art and decided to put some of his work up. At first Niemeyer thought they put them up just to be nice, but with the opening of Matteo's in Carmichael, he knew that they really enjoyed his work.

"Yvette asked me if I could do three flower paintings for the opening of Matteo's," he said. "The problem was that it was opening in three weeks."

The 15 feet of flowers that adorn the walls at Matteo's is one of his proudest works.

"I didn't have time to go back and measure out what I wanted to do, I just had to do it and I think it turned out really well."

The title of the paintings is "Bee's Dream." He described it as what a bee would dream about, a vast expanse of flowers.

Conversely, there is also a painting of a rooster and hen in the restaurant entitled "Bee's Nightmare."

"I always try to put some humor in my art, especially in the titles," he said.

The pieces that hang in Crepeville and Burgers and Brew can be purchased. Each has a card accompanying the piece with his number on it.

"There are plenty of ways to get a hold of me if you need to," he said.

Most of his pieces range in price from \$400-\$700.

He is also featured at the new Maiya Gallery at 2220 J St. As of now, he has four pieces hanging inside and he has been penciled in to be a featured artist sometime in 2010. Some of his newest creations include a series of warped faces. One of the most striking is a piece titled "Yellow Nose Man."

"I like the human face," he said. "People are instantly drawn in by the eyes. 'Yellow Nose Man' was one of the first times I cut down the face into sections using different colors."

To find out more about Niemeyer's work, e-mail him at elzoharm@att.net or see some of his pieces at www.

myspace.com/markharmart. Or, for a live encounter, perhaps just look up the next time you're out to eat. You might just find yourself staring into a dream.

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# Windermere

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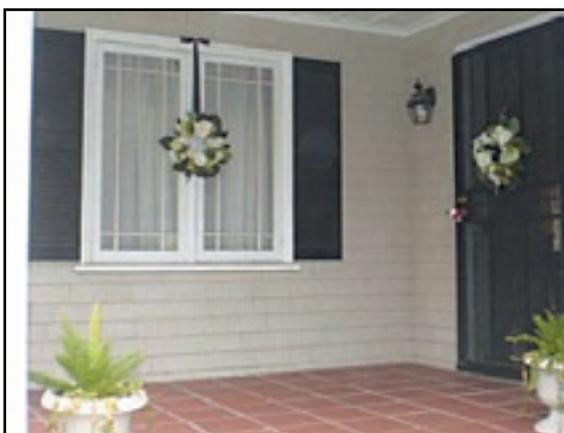
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