Contra Costa Civic Theatre Celebrates 50th Anniversary

CCCT (Contra Costa Civic Theatre) is celebrating its 50th anniversary beginning in September 2009. The 50th anniversary kick-off event and reception will be held by CCCT on Saturday, April 25, 2009 from 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Directors of the five shows and others involved in the 2009–2010 season will make presentations and preview the season. For tickets, go to www.ccct.org.

CCCT was founded in 1959 by El Cerrito residents Louis and Bettianne Flynn and a group of about 30 other local volunteers who wanted to offer quality live theatre for the entire family. In addition to featuring four to six productions per year, CCCT also offered classes for children. CCCT’s unique “Pocket Theatre” was originally in a former movie theatre at Blake St. and San Pablo Avenue (now the Atlas Liquor Store). The building was sold in 1968 and CCCT temporarily occupied the Harding Elementary School auditorium during 1969–70 until it found a permanent location.

In 1970, CCCT partnered with the City to take over the defunct Boys Club buildings at Pomona Avenue and Moeser Lane (the current theatre). The City had planned to tear down the two buildings but instead agreed to lease them to CCCT at the subsidized rate of one dollar per year. At the time, the building was just a shell. CCCT supporters raised $20,000 and donated countless hours of volunteer labor to renovate

Street Repairs Continue in 2009

LAST SPRING, the City kicked off its accelerated street repair and maintenance program, which is intended to repair up to 70% of local streets by the end of 2012. The City’s goal is to improve El Cerrito’s street system rapidly and to complete the repairs in the most efficient way possible.

Last year, crews repaired 500,000 square feet of roadways with potholes or localized pavement failures, and constructed over 300 curb ramps in preparation for the resurfacing work that will start this spring. 2009 marks the beginning of the second phase of the City’s accelerated street repair and maintenance program.

Street Resurfacing to Begin This May

Many streets are scheduled to be resurfaced, and the City will continue repairing curbs, gutters, and street drainage problems on streets scheduled for resurfacing in the future.

Resurfacing involves the entire roadway surface (from curb to curb) along one or more city blocks at a time. There will be some short-term inconvenience while streets are being resurfaced, such as parking restrictions and street closures. The City will provide residents and businesses

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Saturday, April 11
ANNUAL EGG HUNT
Join us for a traditional Egg Hunt with candy and eggs and a visit from a very special bunny. Come early so you won’t miss the start. This event will occur rain or shine!
For questions or to become a sponsor, call the Recreation Department at 559-7000.
When: 10 a.m. sharp (rain or shine)
Where: Arlington Park
1120 Arlington Blvd.

Saturday, April 11
FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY BOOK SALE
The Friends of the El Cerrito Library are hosting a special spring sale of books for children and adults. Proceeds benefit Library programs. For details, visit wwww.ccclib.org.
When: 10 a.m.--4 p.m.
Where: El Cerrito Library
6510 Stockton Ave.

Saturday, April 25
EARTH DAY CELEBRATION
Join hundreds of your neighbors to make El Cerrito a healthier place by planting trees, pulling weeds, and removing litter.
Bring your own water bottle. Work projects will be followed by a free lunch for volunteers at the Community Center. To host or join a work party for Earth Day 2009, go to wwww.ecenvironment.org or call 215-4351.
When: Work parties, 9 a.m.
Volunteer Lunch, 12 noon
Where: El Cerrito Community Center
7007 Moeser Lane.

CALL TO ARTISTS
The Arts and Culture Commission (ACC) invites artists to submit proposals for exhibitions in the Gallery Space at the new El Cerrito City Hall.
El Cerrito Portraits: May 23–July 9
Proposal deadline: April 27
Animals: July 27–September 10
Proposal deadline: June 29
Black and White: September 28–November 6
Proposal deadline: August 24
Food, November 23–January 14, 2010
Proposal deadline: October 26
Submit proposal with an electronic sample to Karen Pinkos, Assistant City Manager, at 215-4302 or email kpinkos@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us. More details online at wwww.el-cerrito.org/gov/arts_culture_commission.html

Deadline: Thursday, April 30
SUNDAR SHADI GARDEN CONTEST
The El Cerrito Garden Club is currently accepting nominations for the Sundar Shadi Garden Contest. To be eligible, the garden must be visible from street or sidewalk. Businesses, residences, and schools are eligible. Gardens will be judged in May. Application forms are available in the City of El Cerrito Recreation Brochure.

Saturday, May 9
Mozart Matinee
Join us for the inaugural event of Midsummer Mozart’s new youth oriented concert under the direction of George Cleve.
Tickets can be purchased at the Community Center for $5/child, $10/ adult.
When: 11 a.m.
Where: El Cerrito Community Center
7007 Moeser Lane.

Thursday, May 14
BIKE TO WORK OR SCHOOL DAY
Celebrate bicycling as a healthy, fun, and economical form of transportation. During the morning commute, stop by the City-hosted “Energizer Station” on the Ohlone Greenway at the El Cerrito Plaza BART station. Visit http://bicycling.511.org/ or call 511 for event details. For information about bike events in El Cerrito, visit wwww.ecenvironment.org or call 215-4339.

Saturday, May 16
2009 BICYCLE SAFETY DAY
See article on page 3 for details.
When: 12 noon–4 p.m.
Where: DMV Parking Lot
6400 Manila Ave.

Sunday, May 17
HERITAGE ROSE SHOW
The Heritage Roses Group’s annual celebration of Old Roses features a large display of roses, plus rosey items for sale including plants, jewelry, crafts, books, stationery and food. Free admission.
When: 11 a.m.--4:30 p.m.
Where: El Cerrito Community Center
7007 Moeser Lane

Saturday, May 23
CITYWIDE GARAGE SALE
Clean out your basement, closets, and garage, and hold a sale at your home on May 23.
Download the registration form at wwww.el-cerrito.org/esd/action.html to be included in the participant list. Shoppers can pick up the list after noon on May 21 at the Recycling Center, the Community Center, or download from wwww.el-cerrito.org. Information is also available at 215-4351.
When: 9 a.m.--3 p.m.
Where: Your home, citywide

Thursday, May 28
BLUE STAR MEMORIAL MARKER DEDICATION
As a tribute to all veterans, the El Cerrito Garden Club and the City of El Cerrito will proudly dedicate a National Garden Clubs, Inc. Blue Star Memorial Marker at Arlington Park. For more information, call Public Works at 215-4339.
When: 10 a.m.--12 noon
Where: Arlington Clubhouse
1120 Arlington Blvd.
Gear Up for Bicycle Safety Day

ATTENTION KIDS and bicycle commuters! The El Cerrito Crime Prevention Committee and the El Cerrito Police Department are proud to co-host the “2009 Bicycle Safety Day” on Saturday, May 16, 2009. The purpose of this event is to promote safe and legal cycling in El Cerrito as well as to raise awareness of the Police Department’s Bike Patrol Program. This drop-in event will be held at the DMV parking lot at 6400 Manila Avenue from noon to 4:00 p.m.

Cyclists of all ages and skill levels can drop in anytime to test their skills in a variety of obstacle courses, learn about basic bike maintenance, discover local bike resources, and talk with a police officer about the rules of the road. There will be a BMX Stunt Team performing at 1:30 pm and 3 pm.

A special thank you to 511 Contra Costa (www.511contracosta.org), East Bay Sanitary Company, and other local businesses for their generous support of this event.

El Cerrito’s Rose Queen

THE CITY COUNCIL added Miriam Wilkins to the El Cerrito Wall of Fame on December 2, 2008 in recognition of her significant contributions to the community.

Ms. Wilkins has organized and chaired the popular Annual Heritage Rose Show at the El Cerrito Community Center for the past 25 years. The event show cases “Old World Roses” and attracts visitors from throughout Northern California.

Daughter of El Cerrito founders Frank and Anna Walsh, Miriam Walsh Wilkins was born in 1918. As a child, she attended Fairmont Elementary School. After obtaining a teaching degree from U.C. San Francisco, she returned as an educator to Fairmont School.

An avid gardener, Ms. Wilkins established the internationally acclaimed Heritage Roses Group in 1975 in an effort to preserve “Old Roses” and was the cheerful author of the Old Roses Digest for many years.

A beautiful dark pink hybrid tea rose is named after Ms. Wilkins, and visitors to the U.C. Botanical Garden in Berkeley can see the Miriam Wilkins rose in bloom each May.

The International Heritage Rose Symposium has honored Ms. Wilkins, and she is also an honorary member of the El Cerrito Garden Club.
Grant Provides Trees to El Cerrito Residents

The city of El Cerrito has received a grant from the State Resources Agency to plant trees throughout the City of El Cerrito. The trees can be planted in front of individual residences, neighborhood blocks, businesses, and in parks.

Last year, 36 new trees were planted as part of the program. Individuals and neighborhood groups can take advantage of this part of the program. For example, Pomona Avenue neighborhood groups can take advantage of this part of the program. Individuals and neighborhood blocks, businesses, and in parks.

Are you interested in adopting one or more new trees in front of your home or business?

1. If so, your first step is to find out what type of tree you want. The tree must be on the City’s Approved Master Tree List and be appropriate for the location. The Master Tree List is available at www.el-cerrito.org/public_works or you may call the Maintenance Division to request a printed copy.

2. Once you have selected an appropriate tree and location, the next step is to contact the Public Works Maintenance Division to apply for an encroachment permit and to sign a two-year Tree Maintenance Agreement. To adopt a tree, you must agree to keep it adequately watered for the first two years. After two years, the City will take over the care of the tree.

3. Then, the City will purchase and plant the requested trees.

It is important for property owners to keep the tree(s) adequately watered. The first two years are critical to establishing the root system. This promotes good tree growth and reduces the likelihood of the sidewalk buckling and uplifting, the result of tree roots searching for moisture.

As part of the grant program, the encroachment permit fee is waived. If there is an area where you would like to see several trees planted, you are encouraged to talk to the property owners. If there is interest, contact the Maintenance Division with a list of addresses. The City will then contact each property owner. If they agree to participate, each property owner will be required to sign the Tree Maintenance Agreement.

Contact the Maintenance Division at 215-4369 with questions about the Adopt-a-Tree program.

Look for Special EBMUD Bill

El Cerrito’s Utility User Tax (UUT) is a voter-approved tax on utilities, including electricity, water, and telephone, paid by customers (users). The UUT helps pay for essential City services such as police, fire, recreation and public works.

While the UUT has always included water service, the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) has not collected the tax since its original approval, citing outdated technology and demanding excessive fees. Recent legal actions stipulating that water districts can only charge administrative fees related to collection have helped the City and EBMUD reach an agreement to collect the UUT on water for El Cerrito’s residents as of July 1, 2008. These additional revenues will help sustain City services in this tough economy.

EBMUD’s current billing system cannot accommodate the UUT on your regular water bill. Because of this, EBMUD will collect the UUT on a separate semi-annual bill. Water customers should look for this bill in May, which will cover the UUT on water for the July–December 2008 period. The next semi-annual bill, due in August, will cover the January–June 2009 period. EBMUD will be updating its system over the next year, and should be able to collect the UUT on its regular bills beginning in 2010.

To learn more about this issue, go to the City’s website at www.el-cerrito.org and click on the link for “Water UUT”.

Trees Available to Residents

Refer to the master street tree list for the scientific names of approved trees, as well as characteristics such as height, growth rate, and whether the tree is evergreen or deciduous, flowering, drought-tolerant, or native to El Cerrito.

- African Yew Pine
- Aristocrat Pear
- Australian Willow
- Autumn Gold Maidenhair Tree
- Big-leaf Maple
- Brisbane Box
- California Bay
- Canary Island Pine
- Chinese Flame Tree
- Chinese Pistache
- Chinese Tallow Tree
- Coast Live Oak
- Cork Oak
- Crabapple
- Eastern Redbud
- European Hackberry
- Fastigiate Hornbeam
- Flax-leaved Paperbark
- Flooded Box
- Golden Rain Tree
- Hedge Maple
- Hybrid Laurel
- Liquidambars
- Little-Leaf Linden
- Moraine Ash
- Muskogee Crape Myrtle
- New Zealand
- Raywood Ash
- Red Horsechestnut
- Scarlet Gum
- Scholar Tree
- Schumard Oak
- Silver Dollar Gum
- Southern Live Oak
- Southern Magnolia
- Swamp Myrtle
- Sycamore Maple
- Weeping Bottlebrush
- Yarwood Sycamore
How to Build or Repair a Fence

As springtime arrives, you may be considering home improvement projects such as building or repairing your fence. For wooden fences under 6 feet in a residential zone, a quick over-the-counter fence clearance application is all you need to install a new fence. However, if you are considering constructing a concrete or masonry wall to serve as a fence, check with the Building Division at 215-4360 because a building permit would be required.

A quick summary of City regulations governing fence location and construction is below:

1. Fences are limited to a maximum height of 3 feet within the front setback of a property. The front setback is from the property line, not the curb. The Planning Division can help you to determine where your property line is. A front setback can vary from 10 to 30 feet depending on your property's zoning designation. Outside the front setback, fences are limited to maximum height of 6 feet unless an exception is granted. A graphic showing the fence height limits is shown in the next column.

2. Chain link is not an allowed material in any area facing a street.

If an overhead structure such as an arbor, pergola, and/or trellis is included as part of your fence, the rules are a little different. All overhead structures require a building permit from the Building Division and are required to be at least 6 feet away from other structures on the property. These structures may be in the front yard or street side setback if the overhead yard feature is:

- No higher than 8 feet measured from finished grade at any point.
- Does not obstruct visibility to vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- No more than two (2) overhead landscape features are located in the front yard.

Overhead structures may be elsewhere on the property but not in the front yard or street side setback and only if the overhead yard feature is no higher than 15 feet measured from finished grade at any point.

If you have any questions about the regulations or the process, please contact the Planning Division at 215-4330.

El Cerrito Maps Now Available!

The El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce recently produced an up-to-date street map for El Cerrito. You can purchase the map for $2 at the El Cerrito City Hall, located at 10890 San Pablo Avenue (at Manila Avenue). For more information about the map, contact the Chamber at 705-1202 or online at www.ElCerritoChamber.org.

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Building Permits

Q: Why do I need a building permit?
A: The permit is part of a process to ensure that the minimum standards for life, health and safety are met.

Q: Do I need a permit to redo my driveway?
A: Yes a permit is required for replacement of your driveway. Drawings should include a site plan and a cross section including location, size, material, slope, drainage and any stairs. If using concrete pavers, manufacturer’s specifications on the pavers should be submitted with drawings.

Q: Can I convert any part of my house, including the garage, into an accessory living space?
A: It depends on the zoning for your area. Please come into City Hall and speak with a planner to discuss your specific circumstances and concerns.

Q: How long does it take to process a building permit?
A: It generally takes 4 to 6 weeks to check plans before the permit is issued.

Q: How much does a permit cost?
A: The cost depends on the scope of your project. Please come into City Hall and someone in the Building Division can review this with you.

Q: Is the Building Division an enterprise fund for the City?
A: No. The Building Division charges cover only the expense of the services rendered (per State law).

Q: How do I contact the Building Division?
A: Visit the “one-stop” counter at City Hall or call ahead 215-4360 for an appointment. You can also email your questions to bldg@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us. For city office hours and days, visit www.el-cerrito.org/home/fridays.html
Police and Fire Help with Child Safety Seat Installations

THE EL CERRITO Fire and Police Departments are working to increase awareness of child safety in our community. Specifically, these departments are now able to assist residents in the proper installation of child safety seats. Proper installation is a primary factor in reducing the number and severity of child injuries in automobile accidents.

Infant deaths due to automobile accidents can be reduced by 71% if the child safety seats used are properly installed. Older children are similarly protected if safety seats and booster seats are used as they were designed. Unfortunately, it can be difficult for the untrained caregiver to install a seat correctly so that it actually protects the child. Installation instructions are often complex and some seats will not fit in all vehicles.

The El Cerrito Fire and Police Departments developed the Car Seat Installation Program to help you make your children as secure as possible in the event of an automobile accident. One Police Officer and three Firefighters have been certified as child safety seat technicians. They have undergone rigorous training through our local trauma center, John Muir Hospital. The course covered the unique requirements for car seat installation for each brand, model and year of passenger vehicle.

In addition to our installers, the Fire and Police Departments have administrative personnel to manage the program and track the on-going training requirements. It is a significant commitment, but one that both the Fire Chief and Police Chief support, because it will have such a powerful impact, reducing traffic injury and deaths for our children.

“The need has been great in West County for this service,” Fire Chief Maples said. “It can be heartbreaking for our firefighters and police officers to attend to injured children who could have been safer if their caregivers had received help with car seat installation.”

Both Departments offer appointments for a technician to help with the correct installation of infant carriers, child seats and booster seats. The Fire/POLice Station across from the new City Hall is a designated National Highway Traffic and Safety Agency (NHTSA) Inspection Station, as are Fire Station #72 (at 1520 Arlington) near the golf course and the Kensington Fire Station. Please call the Fire (215-4450) or Police (215-4400) Department to schedule your car seat installation appointment.

Information Is Just a Call Away

JUST AS YOU WOULD call 911 for a life-threatening emergency, 411 for directory assistance, and 511 for traffic information, now you can call 211 for local health and social services.

211 is a toll-free, easy-to-remember phone number that connects people with local services like child care, youth programs, job training, senior services, immigration assistance, counseling, food, shelter, and natural disaster assistance.

211 is fast, free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day in 150 languages. In Contra Costa County, this service is provided by the Contra Costa Crisis Center. For more information about 211 in Contra Costa County, visit www.211contracosta.org.

Call 211 for:
- Emergency food
- Utility assistance
- Rental assistance
- Job services
- Health care
- Transportation
- Housing/shelter
- Senior services
- And more!

4 Steps for Child Passenger Safety

For maximum child passenger safety, parents and caregivers should follow the following 4 Steps for Kids guidelines for determining which restraint system is best suited to protect children based on their ages and sizes:

1. **FOR THE BEST POSSIBLE PROTECTION** keep infants in the back seat, in rear-facing child safety seats until they exceed the height and weight limit of the particular seat. At a minimum, keep infants rear-facing until at least age 1 and at least 20 pounds.

2. **WHEN CHILDREN OUTGROW THE REAR-FACING SEATS** (at least age 1 and at least 20 pounds) they should ride in forward-facing child safety seats, in the back seat, until they reach the upper weight and height limit of the particular seat (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds).

3. **ONCE CHILDREN OUTGROW THE FORWARD-FACING SEATS** (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds), they should ride in booster seats, in the back seat, until the vehicle seat belts fit properly. Seat belts fit properly when the lap belt lies across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest (usually at age 8 or when a child is 49” tall).

4. **WHEN CHILDREN OUTGROW THE BOOSTER SEATS** (usually at age 8 or when they are 49” tall) they can use the adult seat belts in the back seat, if they fit properly (lap belt lies across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest).
Would you like to ride your bike to go swimming or take classes at the Community Center, or attend meetings at City Hall? The City has recently installed additional electronic lockers at both locations to make it even more convenient for residents and visitors to ride their bikes when running errands or doing business with the City.

The first electronic lockers in the City, installed along the Ohlone Greenway at the El Cerrito Plaza BART Station, are currently used by over 300 “card holders.” Cyclists can buy an electronic bicycle locker card to access the lockers in El Cerrito plus at over 30 other locations in the Bay Area. Melanie Mintz, the City’s Environmental Services Division Manager, says the City has installed the new lockers to help residents choose a mode of travel that helps them get exercise and reduce their carbon footprint. The four new lockers at the Community Center were acquired through a partnership with the West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee, 511 Contra Costa and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Additional lockers are coming to the Del Norte BART station in 2009, with grant funding from the Caltrans Bicycle Transportation Account, in cooperation with BART.

“The lockers, which work somewhat like a parking meter, allow cyclists to stow their bikes and gear. We are also increasing the number of bicycle racks around town, but the lockers provide one more level of convenience and security,” said Mintz. Cards cost $20 and use of the locker costs four cents per hour, which is deducted from the card at the end of each rental. Purchase cards at City Hall, the Community Center, or online at www.bikelink.org. For more information, call 215-4350, or visit the City’s Environmental Services Division website at www.ecenvironment.org. You can learn more about the electronic lockers at other locations in the Bay Area at www.bikelink.org.
The City Council meets regularly to discuss city business, establish policy, make appropriations, and promote an overall vision for El Cerrito. The public is always welcome to attend the meetings. In addition to being able to watch regular city council meetings live on cable television channel 28 or listen on radio station 88.1 KECG, you can now tune in to a live broadcast of regular city council meetings anywhere you have internet access, and also access online video archives of previous meetings.

To watch a Council meeting online, go to www.el-cerrito.org, choose “Government” from the menu and click on the “streaming media” button on the left side of the page. Video archives available on the website begin with October 2008 (the first meeting in the new Council Chambers inside City Hall).

Windows Media Player is required and can be downloaded for free.