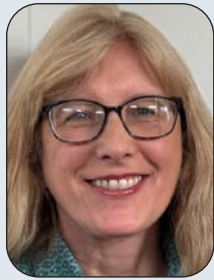




President's Letter



Marianne Gawain

WALK AND TALK

In the new year, CVA is striding ahead with fresh energy, and in fact, we may find ourselves literally blazing trails -- or at least mapping some paths that are well-trod.

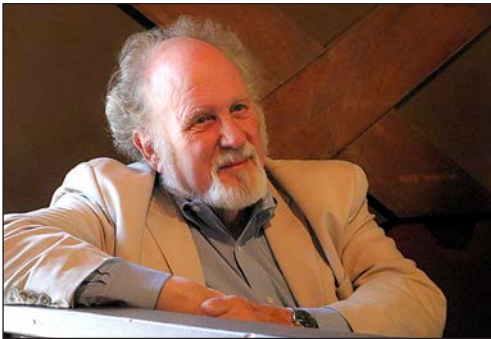
CVA's newly established Trails and Walkability subcommittee launched in January. Thanks to CVA director Kim Forrest for volunteering to lead this project. The subcommittee will enable CVA to react quickly when specific opportunities arise to protect or improve trail access and walkability within the valley. Furthermore, the subcommittee gives us a space where we can brainstorm and perhaps devise a proactive plan to enhance Carmel Valley's trails over coming decades. Several goals emerged from the subcommittee's inaugural meeting: supporting community awareness of and enjoyment of trails; enhancing existing trails with better accessibility, improved maintenance, and connectivity between trails; and improving walkability within and between neighborhoods. These goals are supported by the Carmel Valley Master Plan (CV-3.14 and CV-2.5).

Another new CVA effort in 2026 will emphasize appreciation of natural soundscapes and encourage abatement of noise. Charlie Wahle explains more in an article in this newsletter. Our ongoing dark skies outreach will continue.

As CVA Director John Heyl, our leader in this realm, looks to a wider horizon of dark sky possibilities for the Central Coast region, committee members will focus earthward on community education. They will share simple, practical steps individuals and businesses can take to maintain appropriate nighttime visibility

continued on Pg. 2

PETER MECKEL'S VISION PERSISTS



Peter Meckel photo courtesy of HVMS

by Luana Conley and Sandy Schachter

Passing time has not dimmed Peter Meckel's founding vision of an arts institute that fosters upcoming youth in creative arts, sustained since founding Hidden Valley Music Seminars (HVMS) 63 years ago. The mission has allowed HVMS, nestled into the Carmel Valley location since the early 1970s, to "offer training opportunities of excellence in music and the arts." HVMS also offers classes to adults and connects with the community by operating major public programs in chamber music, orchestral and choral music, opera, and dance. Meckel says, "This is a simple place, but so many wonderful things happen here." Carmel Valley residents recognize Hidden Valley as the cultural jewel of the valley.

Meckel also deeply values the relationship to the neighboring region by providing a venue for business and nonprofit workshops and events that coalesce the local community.

Hidden Valley began in 1963 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit educational corporation in the Angeles National Forest in southern California, then moved to this area for summer programs at the Robert Louis Stevenson and York School campuses. Looking for a permanent location, Meckel found it in Carmel Valley in 1972 on the eight-acre property owned by the Church family. From the moment he set eyes on it, he knew it was the right place for him to carry out his dream, and after leasing for decades, the institute was finally able to buy it about 20 years ago.

carmelvalleyassociation.org

Helping students navigate the career path of an artist is a focus. While becoming adept as part of an ensemble, the artist's own unique creative path needs nurturing, or the up-and-comer may become just another bored play-for-pay performer. Meckel sees himself as "an enabler who creates and uses situations and challenges to encourage both teachers and students to grow as artists and as important elements in leading their fellow humans to new and helpful insights through music."

The institute has a mostly part-time staff of 25 and a board of directors of seven, who meet digitally from across the country. The board's purpose is to "keep the vision alive," says Meckel, "and make sure the mission is well understood."

Meckel has enjoyed so many interesting adventures at Hidden Valley that he is writing a book about them. For example, one audience was seated and awaiting a play's start. They began to wonder at the sounds of a police siren, running footsteps approaching, a brawl coming ever closer, when George and Lennie suddenly burst in the theater door to begin *Of Mice and Men*.

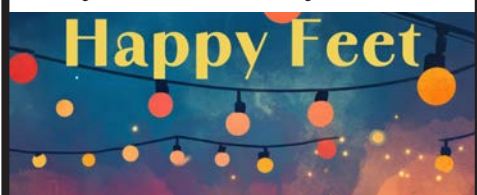
Recently Hidden Valley has been developing a close relationship with the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio, one of the most prestigious college-level music programs in the country. The two have worked together to develop and offer innovative programs and have shared students and faculty. Both institutions share resilience, longevity, and a strong commitment to the local residents. In announcing the January production of *The World Goes 'Round*, Oberlin reports, "We are thrilled to be partnering with the acclaimed Hidden Valley Music Seminars for the third year to bring the artistic excellence of Oberlin College and Conservatory to the beautiful Carmel Valley!"



Hidden Valley Music Seminars

Virtuosi Concerts

Led by Tien-Hsin Cindy Wu, Violin



Saturday March 21 at 7 pm

Brahms, Rachmaninoff, Sibelius & Macy



Facets

Works by Mozart, Beethoven and Shaw

Sunday May 10 at 12:30 pm
Concert + Brunch \$55

Masters' Concerts



Robert Walters, English Horn
Mark Kosower, Cello

Wednesday May 27 at 7:30 pm

Elaine Douvas, Oboe

Tuesday June 2 at 7:30 pm

hiddenvalleymusic.org
(831) 659-3115

President's Letter, continued from Pg. 1

and safety, while saving energy and protecting the night sky.

In coming months, you will surely be hearing from our Wildfire Resilience subcommittee with additional guidance about wildfire risk mitigation and preparedness. With much excellent, professionally-produced information available from fire authorities and non-profit fire prevention entities, CVA aims to avoid replicating work that others are better qualified to do. We see our role as distilling information of particular relevance to our Valley community and making sure that it is available to you in readily comprehensible and actionable formats.

As you see, there are plenty of opportunities to join in the advocacy action as well as to support CVA behind the scenes. Let us know how you'd like to get involved: president@carmelvalleyassociation.org.

I can't let you go without an update on a seemingly perennial problem. Perennial is a cheerful word for resilient plants that bloom year after year--but it's discouraging when applied to thorny problems like establishing vacation rental ordinances! In 2024, after almost a decade of work, the county finally devised and implemented inland and coastal rental ordinances that seemed to represent a practical compromise, protecting workforce housing stock and neighborhood character while simultaneously offering options for those wishing to earn rental income on their properties. CVA summarized how we got here in the November 2025 edition of the Carmel Valley Voice.

CVA has vigorously advocated for vacation rental regulation through years of public comment. We hoped the inland ordinance (and its coastal corollary) would be balanced and enforceable with modest permitting fees and requirements. The 2024 ordinances mostly fit the bill. Like all compromises, they provide a workable solution that requires sacrifices from all sides. My own expectation was that these rules would be implemented for a year or two, then objectively evaluated and tweaked, if needed, based on experience.

Unfortunately, a lawsuit against the ordinances by the Monterey County Vacation Rental Alliance has backed our supervisors into a corner. In December,

to protect the county from legal exposure, they suspended the county's enforcement of provisions prohibiting corporate and out-of-state owners from offering vacation rentals. Then, in January, with opponents claiming that different rental categories are discriminatory and unconstitutional, the Board of Supervisors felt that the only option left to meet the goals of the ordinances and maintain the integrity of our communities was a straightforward ban on all vacation rentals in residential areas, with a few limited exceptions. County staff is now re-drafting ordinances for consideration by the planning commission.

CVA has consistently stated that we do not oppose all vacation rentals, but believe "commercial" rentals--year-round whole-house vacation rentals without an owner present--are functionally visitor-serving business enterprises that don't belong in residential neighborhoods within the Carmel Valley Master Plan area. Other non-commercial vacation rental types could be acceptable if compliant with safety and neighbor-friendly regulations. While some commercial rentals are well-run, in highly touristed areas like ours, investor-owned rental businesses remove houses from the long-term rental market, pressure housing prices upward, and erode community character. This disadvantages long-term renters and aspiring homeowners, whose needs should take priority over tourists' preferences and property owners' desires to maximize revenue.

Kudos to Fifth District Supervisor Kate Daniels for her leadership on this tough issue and her determination to protect housing opportunities. While some problems may be perennial, hope is eternal, and I continue to hope that our county can find a way through this thicket.

Remembering Rich Fox



CVA lost a great friend in November. Rich was a long-time advisor and former vice president. His career as a strategic communications professional spanned missions of humanitarian and environmental advocacy: Doctors Without Borders, UNICEF, the Red Cross, the Fund, Natural Resources Defense Fund, and more. Rich was a volunteer time and talent to advance our community. We are feeling keenly the loss of his kind

THE TIME TO REMOVE POISON HEMLOCK: WHEN IT'S YOUNG

By Mibs McCarthy

Imagine tracking a rotten odor on your property, and coming upon a large dead deer with leafy greens in its mouth. This happened to Carmel Valley resident, Paola Berthoin. With one look she knew it was poison hemlock.



Poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) is an invasive plant brought from Europe as an ornamental in the 1880s. It grows below 5000 feet in dense patches along roads, fields, streams, forest edges, and in cleared or disturbed areas.

All parts of the plant are toxic to humans and animals when ingested.

Poison hemlock grows as a low rosette in its first year with dark green leaves, mostly triangular, lacy, fern-like, and deeply divided. In the spring of its second year, it develops branching and grows a

tall flowering stalk. A telltale characteristic of the plant is the purple blotches or spots on the stem. It grows from three to eight or ten feet tall. Stems are stout, hollow, and ridged. It has a thick, white taproot that can be mistaken for wild parsnip. Poison hemlock resembles the harmless Queen Anne's lace. Queen Anne's lace stems are covered in tiny hairs, and the flowers grow in more of an umbrella shape while poison hemlock flowers grow more rounded and clustered together. It is a biennial plant, which means it lives only two years. But the seeds are another story.

Poison hemlock spreads rapidly by seeds and is hard to eradicate because the seeds can lie dormant

for six years. The plant has been spreading steadily in California since the heavy rains of the first half of 2023. It is highly competitive and prevents establishment of native plants by over-shading.

It is important to eradicate young plants before the seeds develop. When removing the plant, be sure to cover your skin and wear gloves. Hemlock poisoning can also occur if the plant is burned and the smoke is inhaled. Also, avoid getting its sap on any part of your skin, especially any cuts or open wounds. Minor irritation, including contact dermatitis, can sometimes occur when you



Photos from State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management

simply touch poison hemlock with your hands

Pets and wild animals don't know this plant is poisonous. Cattle, goats, and horses are the most sensitive to the plant's toxic alkaloids. All parts of poison hemlock – leaves, flowers, seeds, stems, and roots – are highly toxic to humans and animals. If you think someone may have come in contact with poison hemlock, **call the poison hotline 800-222-1222.**

ber, 2025, with the passing of CVA
t Rich Fox. Rich had a distinguished
ons consultant, helping to further the
vironmental organizations, including
CEF, the Red Cross, World Wildlife
e Council, and Defenders of Wildlife.
ved to Carmel Valley, he dedicated
ancing CVA's priorities. We miss Rich,
ness and insights.

It's time for our annual CVA Board of Directors' election. Current board members nominated for new three-year terms are Deb Evans, Eric Sand, Bob Siegfried, Charlie Wahle, and Jamison Watts. Nominated for new board member to take office for a three-year term in April is Arleen Tarantino.

In accordance with the CVA bylaws, any CVA member in good standing may nominate other candidates by gathering 15 member signatures and submitting them by mail, to be received by February 21st. If other candidates are submitted, ballots will be sent out by email (or mailed, if requested) by March 1st, with votes due back by March 14th. If there are no new petition candidates, the slate will automatically be appointed on March 15th. New terms begin on April 1st, and board members will be introduced at the annual meeting on **April 12, 3-5pm, at Hidden Valley Music Seminars.**



"Hey batta batta, hey swing batta!"

THE LITTLE LEAGUE EXPERIENCE IN CARMEL VALLEY, 1957 – 1997

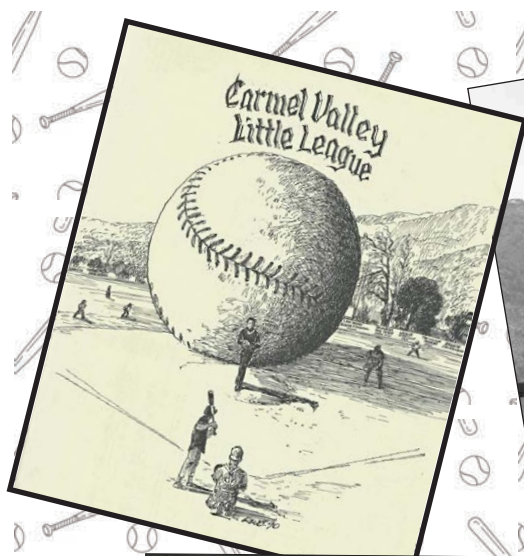
Story by and photos from Krissy Huston, Cherie Ohlson, and the Carmel Valley History Center Museum Exhibit Team

On weekday afternoons and Saturday mornings, from 1957 to 1997, you would hear the sounds that herald the start of a Carmel Valley Little League baseball game - the announcer reporting the names of the players who were at bat and on deck, the thrumming of youthful voices crying "Hey batta batta, hey batta swing!" Then the crack from a bat and the resounding cheers from the bleachers.

"That first day at home plate, I knocked it right out of the park."

Little League became the heart and soul of our small community, first at the original ballpark adjacent to the firehouse on Via Contenta and later at De Dampierre Little League Park on Paso Hondo.

Parents and neighbors volunteered countless hours as coaches, umpires, groundskeepers, snack bar attendants, and board members. Other family members announced games and cheered from the stands. All enjoyed the BBQs on Opening Day, 4th of July, and at the close of the season. The ballpark provided a place of belonging and introduced newcomers into the Valley's tightly knit community.



former players returned years later to coach their children's teams, and some eventually were able to experience the joy of cheering on their own grandchildren.

The Carmel Valley Little League program shaped the lives of generations of Carmel Valley youth, teaching lessons of teamwork, confidence, resilience, and respect, both on and off the field. The players took a pledge to play fair and endeavor to win, but win or lose, to do their best. And they had a lot of fun along the way.

"We did good as a team. It was so much fun. I did not care I only had a Charlie Brown mitt with the fat fingers."

The opening of the Little League Experience in Carmel Valley represents

many months of meetings that tapped the creativity of the exhibit team for the best way to present this Valley tradition. Dozens of memorabilia will be on display, including many rare photographs.

"This beautiful fall day at the Carmel Valley Little League ball park where I know for sure great people played here. Carmel Valley produces the best of the best the world will ever know. This is a fact."

Footnote: From the beginning of our research for this exhibit, every person interviewed emphasized the game itself was secondary to how it impacted lives in other ways. The quotes are from a heartfelt, anonymous letter that captures the memories of this impact so well.

CARMEL VALLEY LITTLE LEAGUE
★ JULY 4 ★
 ANNUAL
BARBECUE
 AT C.V. LITTLE LEAGUE PARK

★ FUN starts at 8:30AM
 ★ RAFFLE PRIZES!
 Barbecue serving starts at 12 Noon

STEAK DINNER \$7.00
HAMBURGER DINNER \$3.50

"With the kindness and friendship of three Carmel Valley families, I was given the joy of one season at this beautiful ball field (De Dampierre)."

Life-long friendships were forged in the dugouts and bleachers that left a multi-generational legacy over the years. Many

Exhibit Opening: March 7-8, 2026, 1:00-4:00
Please join the exhibit team in the "ballpark" at the History Center Museum March 7-8, 2026, 1:00 – 4:00 to bring back memories of why Little League in Carmel Valley was so much more than just a ball game.

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW? PRESERVING CARMEL VALLEY'S NATURAL SOUNDSCAPE



by Charlie Wahle

The Sounds of Home: We are surrounded by a symphony of natural sounds. The coyote's song. The jay's screech. The lizard's rustle underfoot. The hummingbird's staccato clicks. The hawk's overhead cries. The bees' constant hum. The wildcat's yowl. The owl's hoots. The river's rippling. These ubiquitous and often subtle natural sounds amuse, intrigue, and inspire us, sometimes spook us, and always enrich our lives. They are also vital to the sustainability of Carmel Valley's ecosystems. Natural sounds help local animals to navigate, communicate danger and opportunity, defend their territories, find mates, protect their babies, catch prey, and avoid becoming someone else's dinner. Natural sounds make healthy ecosystems and healthy humans.

The Importance of Preserving our Soundscape: This diverse collection of biological and physical sounds makes up Carmel Valley's natural soundscape. Just like our viewsheds, the soundscape is vulnerable to degradation, and we're losing it one noise at a time. Increasingly, our familiar natural sounds are being overtaken by the unnatural and often unnecessarily loud noises we create in our everyday lives. Leaf blowers blasting. Chain saws whining. Masticators chewing. Traffic rumbling. Delivery trucks beeping.

Tools fixing and building. Party music blaring. Special events proclaiming. Supercars and motorcycles roaring. Unabated, this trend may displace natural sounds, and the animals that rely on them, from our daily lives. Noise doesn't just bother critters; it can also be harmful to humans, disrupting our sleep, productivity, mood, and overall health. It doesn't have to be this way.

How You Can Help: Unlike big environmental challenges that often seem beyond our grasp, noise pollution is created locally and incrementally and is largely under our control. Becoming a good steward of Carmel Valley's soundscape is surprisingly easy and can even be fun. Make a game out of listening to your surroundings and identify sources of both natural sounds and human noise around you. How many natural sounds can you hear? What human-generated noises have become an unwelcome part of your soundscape, like excessive outdoor party music, racing cars, or loud public address systems at special events? Armed with this awareness, try to make a conscious effort to reduce the level and duration of noises you create with machines, music, vehicles, etc. Share those practices with you family, friends, neighbors, visitors, and renters. Additionally, you can report excessive noise sources to Monterey County's Department of Housing

and Community Development, ideally with digital documentation of sound levels using readily available cellphone apps [phone: 831-755-5177; web: redirme.com/pk2vbb]. By taking these easy doable actions, we can all have a positive impact on preserving Carmel Valley's natural soundscape.

What CVA Is Doing to Help: Our new Natural Soundscapes initiative is intended to empower Carmel Valley residents to help preserve the natural soundscapes of our home by (1) providing public information to our residents and businesses about easy ways and best practices to reduce noise and still enjoy life; (2) documenting the current levels and sources of human-generated noise in the valley and identifying chronically loud areas; and (3) engaging with Monterey County to publicize, monitor, and evaluate existing rules and enforcement regarding the control of noise levels. If you are interested in volunteering with any part of this project, please contact us at: carmelvalleyassociation@gmail.com.

Carmel Valley's soundscape is a vital and increasingly threatened part of our shared natural heritage. We owe it to ourselves, and to those who follow, to take the simple actions that will preserve the coyotes' song and the owls' hoots.

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The Carmel Valley Association is one of the oldest, largest, and most successful community organizations in Monterey County. We are entirely volunteer, with no paid employees. We work with residents, businesses, and government to uphold our mission.

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Contact the Carmel Valley Voice:

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Banner photo of Valley
moonrise by David Dilworth

*****ECRWSSDDM*****

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INTRODUCING NEW CVA BOARD MEMBERS

In the fall of 2025 CVA's board was pleased to appoint two new directors to fill open positions. Environmental biologist **Jamison Watts** brings to the CVA extensive experience as a land trust manager, having served as executive director of the Northern California Land Trust and the Marin Agricultural Land Trust and as an independent consultant on land conservation and stewardship. He will be sharing

with us not only his understanding of climate change adaptation, ecosystem connectivity, and biodiversity, but also skills in nonprofit management and strategic planning. Jamison is currently executive director of the Santa Lucia Preserve. He and his family live in Carmel Valley Village.

Deb Evans and her three rescue pups also live in the Village. Deb has worn a wide variety of hats during her career. For many years she was operations manager for TriWest Group, a consulting company specializing in human services research and evaluation. Deb currently works part-time for TriWest doing editing and special projects. Deb also has long experience as a civic volunteer. In her former hometown of Eldora, Colorado, Deb was the key author in researching, documenting, and producing the Eldora Environmental Preservation Plan, which was adopted by county commissioners and provided a basis for protecting land from large-scale development. Since moving to the Monterey area, Deb has volunteered in the archives of the Steinbeck Center and in the California History Room at the Monterey Public Library. Unsurprisingly for someone who has a master's degree in cultural anthropology, Deb is most interested in supporting the Carmel Valley Association's priorities in the areas of civic engagement and cultural/historical preservation. Welcome to the board, Jamison and Deb!

A third new name also appears on the CVA slate this year, nominated to join the board in April. **Arleen Tarantino** lives on a beautiful mountain property high above Mid-Valley with her husband Bill. With the strength and determination of the triathletes they are, the Tarantinos have eradicated genista from all of their forty acres! Arleen, who holds degrees in both chemistry and literature, has taught critical thinking at Monterey Peninsula College and through the Osher Life Long Learning Institute program, among other institutions. Arleen is already an active member of CVA's Natural and Cultural Heritage Committee and has special interests in trails, dark skies, invasive plants, and wildfire risk mitigation.

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