

VIVA!

VINEYARD VALLEY NEWS

VOLUME 50

JUNE 2026

NUMBER 5

hello
SUMMER



JUNE EVENTS

VVHA Sponsored

Secret Garden Tea, June 6

BINGO, June 12

VVHA Board Meeting, June 17

Friday Night Social, June 26

Community Sponsored

St. Helena Pride Day, June 20

St. Helena Annual Classic Car Show, June 21

Welcome New Advertiser! Cynthia Summers Alterations, p.21

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A

Secret Garden Tea

*You are joyfully invited to a Spring
Garden Tea filled with fresh
blossoms, delicious tea and fine
comestibles, cheerful company, and a
fashion show highlight!*

SATURDAY, JUNE 6

1:30 DOORS OPEN

2:00 EVENT BEGINS

**VINEYARD VALLEY
CLUBHOUSE**

*\$25 Advance tickets only;
for availability, contact
Eve Breckenridge (707) 968-1482*

June 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6 Tea Party 2:00PM Club Room
7	8	9	10	11	12 BINGO 6:00pm	13
14	15	16	17 VVHA Board Meeting 3PM	18	19	20 St. Helena Pride Day 1-4PM
21 Classic Car Show 11-3 Father's Day	22	23	24	25	26 Friday Night Social 5:30PM	27
28	29	30				
Tu, Thurs Water Aerobics with Stacey 10-11:00 AM Community Pool						
Red-VVHA Community Black-Public Observance Green-Local Event Violet-VVHA						

2026-2027 VVHA OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

President, Janet Schmidt
Vice President, Rick Wood
Secretary, Mae Van Nett
Treasurer, Henk Brok

Directors:
Chris Killion
Steve Kinney
Inger Laidley
Vivian Pichner
Audrey Ward



Committee/Activity Chairs

VVHA Clubhouse Coordinator:
Mae VanNett

Hospitality:
Co-chairs: Chris Killion and Bernie Casey

Memorials and VV Clubhouse Coordinator:
Janeen di Rienzo

Directory:
Chris Killion

Library:
Joyce Cahill, Rick Wood

Bocce Committee Chair:
Rick Wood

VVHA Website:
Michael Merriman



Non-Social Resident-formed Groups

Community Education: Grace Kistner

If there is a death, call Janeen di Rienzo at 707-294-8307 so she can post it on the bulletin board and arrange for the \$50 donation to the organization you designate. She will explain how to schedule the clubhouse for a memorial.

June Birthdays

- 7 John Andreotti
- 8 Robin McGuire
- 9 Maureen Barton, Pat Meyers
- 12 Karen Bradley
- 14 Ingrid Ibarra
- 17 Tom Ringenberg
- 19 Kathleen McCreedy, Pierrette Simpson
- 25 Jean Thompson
- 26 Joy Peters
- 28 Marina Lavagnino, Linda Snowden

VIVA!

Mission Statement: To provide a periodic newsletter concerning current and upcoming events, VVHA news, activities, neighborly news, and other non-political and local items of interest to all Vineyard Valley residents.

Editor

Francine Freeman

Business Manager

Henk Brok

Advertising

Henk Brok

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VIVA

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St. Helena, CA 94574

email: viva.vineyardvalley@gmail.com
content deadline: 22nd of each month

The Prez Sez . . . by Janet Schmidt

Hi Friends,

The number one thought on my mind today is the annual Tea & Fashion Show coming on Saturday, June 6th. The theme this year is "The Secret Garden, Birds, Bees & Butterflies". Three years ago, when I rejoined the VVHA Board, the first request we received was to bring back the Tea. Covid had stopped most of the events in the park and the gals were anxious and ready for the return of our Tea. Jean Martin and her sister, twenty something years ago, introduced the tea party to the park and it's been an annual event ever since. My first experience was in 2012, and I've been a table hostess many, many times since. The creativity and imagination we have from the ladies here in the park is known city wide. Every year we have many from outside the park invited and anxious to join the annual event.

If you are unable to attend the tea, you may stop by the clubhouse on Saturday, June 6th at 1:30pm and preview the 10 tables.

Bingo on the June 12th and the Friday Night Social on the 26th are the other events for the month. Watch the VVHA mailroom bulletin board for the 4th of July flyer showing events and times for the day.

See you around the park!

Janet

VINEYARD VALLEY HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION MEETING MINUTES FROM MAY 20, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 by Janet Schmidt.

The minutes of the April 22nd 2026 meeting were approved as mailed and posted.

The Treasurer's report was approved as presented by Rick Wood and Janet Schmidt, in Henk's absence, see attached. We have a net balance of \$24,187.94.

Reports – The board is looking to purchasing new and different table cloths, a new coffee pot and a Blackstone Grill for the bocce court, to be used for outdoor events

Bingo–May Bingo: 47 people attended with \$470 awarded in prizes; we netted \$290.

Upcoming events –The May Social will be held on Friday the 22nd. Come join us for an evening of friendship and fun. Our annual Tea and Fashion Show will be held June 6. Tickets (\$25) will be on sale at the Mail Room this weekend and next week, from 11-1. Come early before they are all gone!

Open Discussion – it was suggested that Board Members who usually buy and prepare the meals for the various events be given \$20 for gas when driving to Napa and \$25 when going to Santa Rosa. This will be discussed at the next Executive Board meeting.

It was noted that there are far too many cats roaming around the property, and that the birds can be easy prey. Also, there are several big dogs, out running loose, which frighten people out for a walk.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 pm.

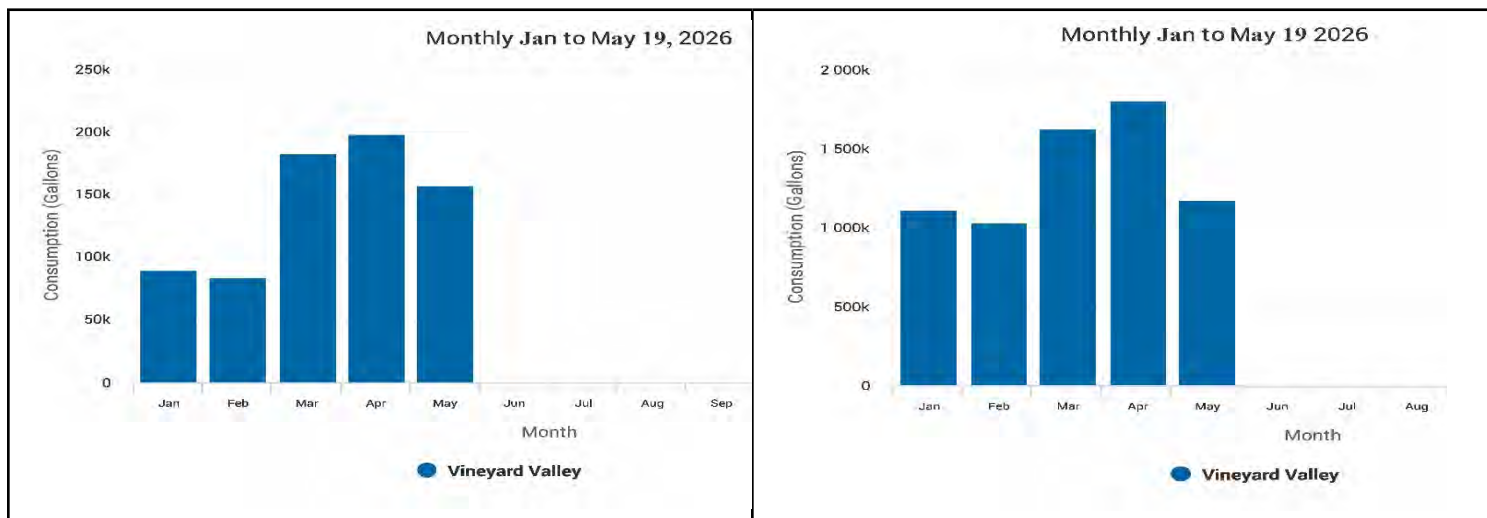
Respectfully submitted by Inger Laidley, Secretary pro tem.

PARK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

June 2026

WATER CONSERVATION

While the weather has been windy and dry water usage has increased. Below are two charts of Vineyard Valley water usage for 2026 to May 19th. The chart on the left represents usage for the 6" meter which feeds the homes on Los Robles, La Cuesta, La Canada, Redondo, San Ardo, Laguna Seca, Del Campo and Del Rio. The chart on the right represents usage for the 2" meter which feeds the homes on Del Monte and San Lucas. Residents are encouraged to set their irrigation timers three times a week for 10 to 15 minutes. If you would like assistance setting your controller please contact the office.



FIRE SEASON

The windy and dry weather and small fires in the area are a reminder that California is in fire season. Vineyard Valley has scheduled the annual fire-retardant application around the perimeter, corporation yard fences (not the vegetable gardens) and some triangles for mid-June. Residents will be notified in advance of the date. Communication has begun with the St. Helena Police Department and Fire Department to schedule a meeting and an evacuation drill.

PARK UPDATES

Mowing is continuing as regularly scheduled every two weeks, normally on Thursday and Friday weather permitting. All the turf in the Park was edged, requiring three landscapers for four days. Sprinkler repairs are ongoing with 38 repairs made in the months of April and May to date. Water main leaks were addressed that required water shut offs, repairs were made quickly. Path lights were installed along the San Juan pathway which required trenching and extensive electrical work. Path lights were also installed along the San Lucas pathway which required trenching and electrical work. Removal and clean-up of a significantly large tree limb that had fallen which required most of the day to complete. Trees were inspected and treated by the arborist with additional maintenance work scheduled. Work on the flagstone patio including power washing, adding polymer sand, and sealing surfaces was completed as weather permitted. The therapy pool and surrounding tile were professionally cleaned the week of May 18th. Daily lagoon and swimming pool maintenance is ongoing.

Home sales in Vineyard Valley continue to thrive, highlighted by an impressive 82% sales conversion rate—with 9 out of 11 homes listed sold this year.

FIRE SEASON IS UPON US

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE GLASS FIRE

By Elizabeth Green

For those of you who didn't live here during the Glass Fire, the following is a heartfelt reminder of what happened that night. For those of you who did, a resident describes the nightmare we all went through: "We were all terrified to wake and find the mountain across from us on fire (literally at The Trail across from the Pope St. Bridge) and scrambled to evacuate the park. Many of us thought we would never see our homes again. It was a miracle our park did not burn down. With 200-foot flames bearing down on us, our little community jumped into action and neighbors woke each other up on every street. With embers bouncing off our roofs and streets, many left the park in the early hours of Monday morning, September 28th. A long line of cars exited the park at 3:30 in the morning while others continued to get ready to leave in hopes they hadn't waited too long. I am proud of the action of our residents that morning, and I know how deadly the situation could have turned. We had seen what happened during the Tubbs fire, and that very well could have been us. I kissed my front door when I left, told my house that I loved it, and said a prayer before leaving it all behind to whatever fate was to come. Vineyard Valley residents should be proud of themselves. As a community, we acted and reacted as a neighborhood that cared about each other."

As a result of this situation, I wrote an article after the Glass Fire on how to be prepared. For all of us living here at the time, it was a wake-up call. NOW is the time to review what your action plan is. Below is a checklist of things that can make an official warning or evacuation as seamless as possible if you are organized ahead of time.

- Have an evacuation plan ready ahead of time. Make an evacuation checklist ahead of time that includes everything you want to take, especially medication and important documents. Keep the list in a safe place so that in a hurry, you don't forget anything. Get a "go bag" ready and keep in an accessible place.
- If you have a pet, get the carrier, food, and all necessary things together that you will need for possibly several days.
- Keep your cell phone charged and take a charger with you as well as a battery-operated radio for emergency updates.
- Sign up for Watch Duty and/or Everbridge (formerly Nixle). During the Glass Fire, there was also a lot of information on Nextdoor.com.
- **KNOW YOUR ZONE:** Zonehaven is a new evacuation management plan devised to help residents know when to evacuate by dividing St. Helena into zones based on your address. **Our zone in Vineyard Valley is STH-E004.**
- Have a flashlight handy in case there is a power outage or a headband light which is hands free and lights up your way. (A neighbor fell and fractured her hip trying to get into her car in the dark. Power was out and it was pitch black).
- Have a pre-planned place you can stay or a hotel or motel (have the numbers

already in your phone) in the event you must leave at night with very little warning. Residents were leaving in the middle of the night and had to find places to stay after they left the park.

- Be sure to place the Evacuation sign given by police or in the Emergency packet given out by VV management, (NOT a home-made one) on your front door to save emergency personnel precious time and thus possibly save a life. If signs are all uniform, they will be easy to spot by police or fire. Do not worry about looters. The SH police will be driving through our park to keep an eye on things if the park has been evacuated. Leave your porch light ON so first responders can see in the dark.
- If there is an official warning, make sure all of the above is in place. You may not have much time after that, as evidenced by the rush to get out of the park during the Glass Fire. In fact, if an advisory warning is issued, consider you're on notice. That is the time to get fully prepared to leave. If at any time you do not feel safe, trust your instincts and leave.
- If there is an official evacuation, police cars will be driving through the park using the high/low warning signal, which means LEAVE IMMEDIATELY. If you decide to stay, remember, if you find yourself in danger, you will NOT be able to count on help from first responders as they already told you to leave and will be busy somewhere else.
- If you have time, check on your neighbors if you think they may need help or are not aware that we need to evacuate, or even if there's an official warning, so they are prepared to leave, especially if physically challenged. If you live alone, make arrangements with a family member that lives in the area or with a neighbor.

PLEASE NOTE:

The VV Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation Plan that is in the mail room, states on p. 2, SB 23, Statutes of 2009, Chapter 551: *"It is not the intent of the Legislature that an owner or operator be responsible for physically evacuating residents from their homes during an emergency. It is further the intent that residents take personal responsibility for themselves during an emergency"*.

The Glass Fire happened on a weekend--Sunday night--so we were on our own. In closing, make an action plan, know what you're taking and where you're going, and look out for your neighbors if possible. Lessons learned from a time I will never forget.





FRIDAY, June 12



**CLUBHOUSE DOORS OPEN 6:00PM
GAMES BEGIN 6:30**

- \$15.00 Entry Pack includes 3 x 6 games, dauber, and dinner
- Those with specific food requirements or allergies are welcome to provide their own
- BYO beverage
- Extra Game Packs \$10.00
- Cash Prizes for winners!



MAY BINGO WINNERS!

(l-r): John Pitts, Ed Smith (bingo caller extraordinaire), Chris Killion, KT Waxman, Mark Puteo, Dale O’Shaughnessy, Steve Waxman



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References from park residents available

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Know Thy Neighbor



by Suzanne James

This month we give a shout out and a warm hello to a charming new resident in Vineyard Valley who is delighted to be in our Park where “everyone is so nice!”

Born and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma, she has an older sister who lives in Frisco, Texas, just outside of Dallas. Our new neighbor describes being close to her parents and took care of them in their declining years, even moving in with them for periods of time. “Taking care of my parents taught me many lessons, and when I look back, it was a true honor.

“My sister and I had a great childhood in a neighborhood full of children of all ages. My parents were very hospitable so there were neighborhood gatherings all the time. My Mom made our house a home, and all were welcome there.”

“Taking care of my parents taught me many lessons, and when I look back, it was a true honor.”

Her father was an attorney who initially worked in the District Attorney’s office and then moved on to private practice where his work was broader and had less to do with criminality. Her mother worked in a medical clinic as a receptionist. According to our neighbor, “I spent a lot of summers working for my Dad.”

Our neighbor attended public school K through 6th grade, then transferred to a Catholic girl’s school through high school. Following graduation she travelled to Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado where she excelled in skiing. This was followed by a transfer to the University of Oklahoma in Norman, OK where she graduated in 1980 with a Paralegal degree. “I didn’t really want to go to college, I was anxious to get a job and start working!”

She did get a job with a local attorney in Norman and he suggested she take classes to be a paralegal, which she did, taking those classes on Saturdays her final year in college.

After graduating from college she returned home and started working for an oil and gas attorney, providing drill site title opinions to oil companies. “But when the ‘oil bust’ hit in 1985 there were cut-backs so I went to work for my Dad again, working with him in a general law practice.” Asked whether she enjoyed her work, she responded that she liked it to “a certain degree.”

She married in 1990 and they shared a good life for 32 years. “He continues to be a great father and grandfather.” She continued working for her father until the birth of their first daughter. Six months later she accepted employment selling advertisements for The Tulsa Kids, a magazine for children. After four years she

opened a consignment shop for children's clothes after travelling to consignment shops in other states to study their business models. She enjoyed being a sole proprietor and grew her business which still exists today.

She had her second daughter right before opening her shop so life was busy but good. After several years she sold the shop and moved on to a gift shop in Tulsa where she worked for roughly twenty years off and on doing gift wrapping and window displays. Her resume also includes being the Director of Development at a non-profit for three years.

Her second daughter, Allie, moved to Sacramento CA to attend college and has stayed there with her husband. They are the parents of two young girls, two and six years old. This family is one of the main reasons our neighbor has resettled here for six months a year, spending the remainder of the year in Tulsa where her first daughter, Libby, lives, working for T-Mobile and studying holistic and spiritual energy.

In her free time she enjoys walking, cooking, traveling, reading fiction and biographies, and spending time with friends and her two granddaughters. She also continues to help previous clients in her interior design business which she is trying to wind down. "However, it's hard to say NO to people you enjoy working with!" She demonstrates her considerable design skills in her newly remodeled home and yard.



Join me in welcoming Karol Page, our new neighbor this month. She lives at 7 Redondo Court.

Volunteers and suggestions for this column are encouraged and welcome.

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Sunny Merryvale Winery

by Mariam Hansen, St. Helena Historical Society

In fall of 1933 Louis M. Martini Winery began construction and one million gallons of wine was made, wrote the St. Helena Star September. The official end of Prohibition was on December 5, 1933, but local winemakers knew the law was about to be repealed.

Gioacchino "Jack" Riorda came to the USA from Italy in 1911. He came to the Napa Valley in 1924 just after the start of Prohibition.

June 8, 1934 the St. Helena Star reported that Riorda was completing construction of his new winery, Sunnyhill. Jack struggled to make a profit and needed marketing expertise. Then he met Cesare Mondavi.

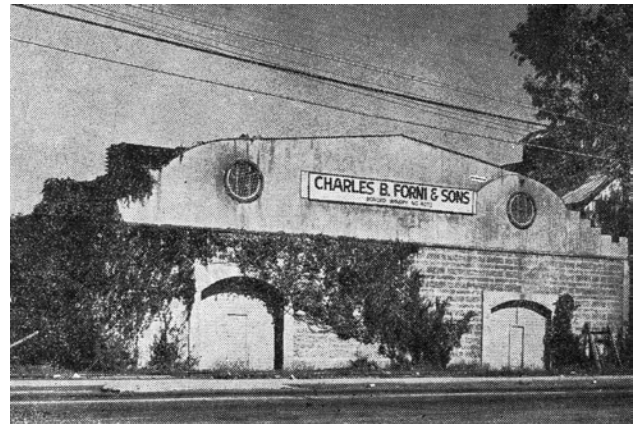
June 16, 1937 Sunnyhill Winery incorporated as Sunny St. Helena Winery (SSHW) with Cesare Mondavi as president, Riorda as vice president/winemaker. Robert Mondavi represented his father and learned winemaking at the new facility. SSHW crushed 2,000 tons of grapes, producing over one million gallons of wine.

But Jack Riorda was not well and in October 1939 he died. Cesare was still president of the company, but now Fred Beroldo was vice president and Peter Belardinelli was secretary-treasurer. SSHW sold over one million gallons of bulk wine, much of it sold to Charles Krug Winery. In 1943 these men helped found the Napa Valley Vintners.

Sunny St. Helena was sold to Martin Stelling, Jr. in 1946. Stelling, Ed Chaix and Charles B. Forni (manager) changed the name to Napa Cooperative Vineyards. The winery had 500,000-gallon capacity. Tragically, Martin Stelling, Jr. died in a car crash in 1950. The winery was sold to Charles B. Forni, who formed a cooperative, Napa Cooperative Vineyards, replacing the Sunny St. Helena sign.

Forni leased the winery to C. Mondavi & Sons, who subleased it to a new SSHW cooperative with 28 growers. The first meeting of board of SSHW held January 28, 1957, electing Andrew Fagiani president; Robert Keig, vice president; and Robert Mondavi, Secretary-treasurer. Carlo Forni became manager, then Dennis Gaggetta.

The 10-year lease from Charles Forni to C. Mondavi & Sons to SSHW was extended to June 1971. Andrew Fagiani President; Louis Tonella, vice president, Peter Mondavi, secretary-treasurer. The name reverted back to Sunny St. Helena. By 1970 most growers quit the cooperative, preferring to sell their grapes to Mondavi's Charles Krug Winery.



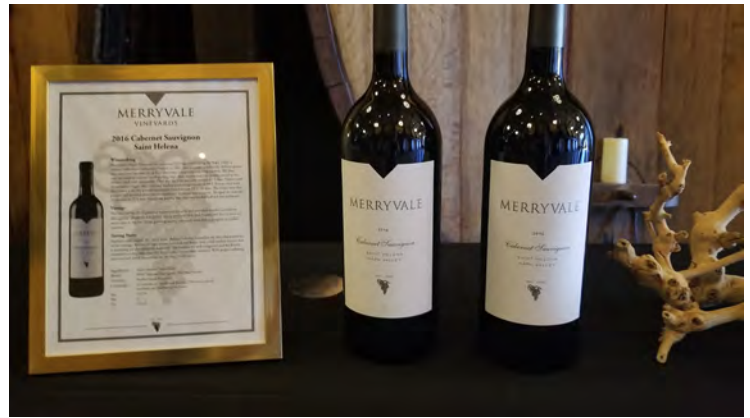
In 1971 the lease expired, the property reverted to Charles B. Forni, who leased it to Christian Brothers for storage. Soon the Christian Brothers' Mont La Salle Vineyards bought the property. In May 1986, they sold it to South Bridge Associates, a partnership of Bill Harlan, John Montgomery, Robin Lail and Peter Stocker (same partners as Meadowood Resort).

Harlan applied to St. Helena Planning Commission for a use permit for a winery that had been dormant for over ten years. Neighbors objected to the noise and traffic of a winery near them and the planning commission limited the operating to storing and ageing wine—no crushing, tasting or retail

sales. The city council wanted the winery to re-open so it rezoned the property and allowed a fully functioning winery.

Sunny St. Helena staged its first crush since 1970 in August 1987. The winemaker was Phillip Zorn, president Robin Lail, and Bill Harlan was managing partner. The problem arose as to what to name the winery. Christian Brothers kept the Sunny St. Helena name, so the partners named the facility for their vineyard, Merryvale. By 1991 the winemaker was Bob Levy and there were 23 employees. Jack Schlatter became one of the partners in 1991. He became sole owner in 1996 as Schlatter Family Estate LLC.

A new chapter in the business began in 2003 when Stanly Ranch Vineyards sold 75 acres to the Schlatter family, who began their new Star-mont Winery. The facility comprises 65,000 square feet with solar panels providing 60% of power needs. The City of Napa had annexed the area, so it can boast of a new winemaking district. The Star-mont brand is 85% of the parent company's production.



Display inside Merryvale Tasting Room

Today Merryvale is an integral part of the St. Helena community and so is the Schlatter family, who are local residents.

(Have a history question? Email me at research@shstory.org)



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Father's Day
June 21, 11:00am - 3:00pm

Adams Street at Library Lane

FRIDAY NIGHT SOCIAL

FRIDAY, JUNE 26
5:30 PM



 IN THE CLUBHOUSE LANAI

**BRING AN APPETIZER AND A
BEVERAGE TO SHARE**

2026 Summer Concerts in the Park

St. Helena 2026 Summer Concert Series

Wednesdays, June 17 to August 12

The 2026 St. Helena Summer Concert Series returns to Lyman Park on Wednesday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., starting June 17 and running through August 12. The free, family-friendly events feature live music, local food vendors, and community activities.

Wednesday Evening Concert Lineup at Lyman Park

June 17: Neon Velvet (80s & 90s Party Hits)
June 24: Petty Rocks (Tom Petty Tribute)
July 8: Andre Thierry (Accordion Soul)
July 15: Dustin Saylor (Country)
July 22: Big Blu Soul Revue (Soul, R&B, & Funk)
July 29: Band 707 (Rock, Oldies, & Spanish Fusion)
August 5: Mustache Harbor (Yacht Rock)
August 12: Closing Night Performance

Note: There will be no regular Wednesday evening concert on July 1; instead, you can catch the Saint Helena Community Band performing at Lyman Park on July 4 at 5:30 p.m. prior to the city's fireworks at Crane Park.

***Lyman Park is located at
1498 Main Street, St. Helena***

Calistoga 2026 Concerts in the Park

Thursdays, June 18 to August 20 | 6:30 - 8:30pm

Thursday Evening Concert Lineup at Pioneer Park

June 18: National Park Radio - Eclectic mix of Folk and Pop
June 25: AquaNett - 80s Glam Rock
July 2: Traveling Willburys Revue - Classic Rock
July 9: Boys of Summer - Eagles Tribute Band
July 16: Kid Galaga - Dance music from the 60s, 70s, 80s
July 23: Second Hand Funk - Funk and Soul
July 30: The Humdinger Band - Rock and Soul
August 6: Jane Blonde and the Goldfingers - British Rock, Soul and Pop
August 13: Miko Marks - Country Americana and Roots Music
August 20: Maya - Latin Tribute Band

***Pioneer Park is located at
1308 Cedar Street in Calistoga***

RIANDA HOUSE SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER

The Artist's Way Workshop | *Julia Rydman*

Thursdays, May 28 - July 2, 1:00-2:30, Rianda House

Unlock your creativity in this 6-week accelerated Artist's Way workshop for non-artists, hidden creatives, professionals, and artists. In a supportive peer setting, overcome perfectionism and the inner critic, rediscover childlike creativity, and use core tools—daily Morning Pages and weekly Artist Dates—to unblock and inspire you. **RSVP**

Diabetes Prevention & Education | *Anne Bernardin*

Tuesdays, June 9-30, 3:00-4:30, Rianda House

Nearly 1 in 3 adults over 65 has diabetes, but small changes can make a big difference. In this 4-part series, Nutrition Educator Anne Bernardin shares simple, practical ways to boost energy and balance blood sugar. Learn how food affects your body and easy strategies that work—no strict diets, just real-life solutions. **RSVP**

St. Helena Farmers Market

Friday, June 19, 7:30-12:00, 360 S Crane Park | St. Helena

Stop by the Rianda House booth at the St. Helena Farmers Market on the second Friday of each month. Get information about programs and activities. Enjoy fresh produce, beautiful hand-crafted items and non-profit organizations in this family friendly atmosphere!

Baking with Beth | *Beth Brown*

Wednesday, June 17, 11:00-1:00 | Rianda House

Come join us for our monthly baking class! Crisp, creamy and brimming with the summer with the delicious flavor of fresh strawberries, let's bake this mouth-watering Strawberry Cream Tart. Room for six bakers. **RSVP**

Conozco Puertas Abiertas y Nuestros Servicios | *Esmeralda Gil*

Tuesday, June 23, 10:30-11:30 | Rianda House

Puertas Abiertas es un centro comunitario que apoya a la comunidad Latina en el Valle de Napa. Ofrecemos apoyo con recursos como salud y empleo, ayuda para llenar formularios y talleres sobre temas como finanzas y uso de tecnología. También contamos con programas de bienestar emocional como La Cultura Cura, donde pueden compartir, aprender y sanar en comunidad, así como un grupo de arte para personas mayores. Nuestro deseo es que cada persona que llegue se sienta bienvenida, apoyada y parte de nuestra comunidad. **RSVP**

Oat Hill Mine Trail | *Kerry Brackett*

Tuesday, June 23, 9:00-10:00 | 2082 Oat Hill Mine Trail, Calistoga

Join us for a 1-mile steady incline hike up the Oat Hill Mine trail to see the panoramic view of Napa Valley. This trail begins at the intersection of HWY 29 and Silverado Trail north of Calistoga. Please bring a hat and water bottle. **RSVP**

Building Foundations of Caregiving | Gene Girimonte, Alzheimer's Association

Monday, June 29, 1:00-2:00 | Rianda House

Caring for someone living with dementia brings a unique set of challenges and rewards. With the right support, you can empower yourself to provide quality care to the person living with dementia while managing your own well-being. Join us to learn about caregiving and common relationship changes, how to build your support team and ways to manage caregiver stress. **RSVP**

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THE TASTING ROOM

by Steve Kinney

Robert Mondavi Winery

The iconic Robert Mondavi Winery has just completed an extensive three-year remodel. Gone is the large courtyard lawn where many summer concerts were enjoyed. It has been replaced with a gorgeous, native-plant landscaped "garden" with walkways. The left side building has been replaced with a striking, multi-room venue for tastings and food presentations. There are large, glass walls that can open to the herb garden used in food presentations. They also look out to the To Kalon Vineyard and surrounding hills. The wood details inside come from repurposing the large wooden barrel fermenters that were a key part of the cellar. (There were more than twenty 3,000-gallon barrels at about 15 feet tall.) All in all, a very snazzy redo!



Mondavi holds a special place in my heart for all the times they helped educate and inform my senses about wine, I enjoyed several of their concerts over the years as well. Robert Mondavi, for whatever faults he may have had, was dedicated to educating and enlightening people about wine and food. I was allowed to attend quite a few seminars over the early years of my career, and I will forever be beholden.

Needless to say, the winery is a far different place now. It is now owned by Constellation Brands, one of the biggest companies in the wine business. No one from the family is involved in the winery anymore. It was sold in 2004 amid some troubling financial problems. But it still has To Kalon Vineyard, some 450 acres of arguably the best grapes. These allow it to consistently produce some amazing wines. Opus, Beckstoffer and Mondavi all have plots in this amazing vineyard and the wines with its name compel a hefty price. After splitting from his family in 1965, Mondavi opened the winery in 1966 with the Mission style look and water tower that still exist. In 1968 Mondavi released his Fumé Blanc, an oak aged Sauvignon Blanc. This mimicked the habits of France's Loire Region and helped change the Napa landscape for Sauvignon Blanc.

Our tasting started with the check-in and a taste of the 2023 Stags Leap District Sauvignon Blanc. Bright zesty fruit with nice acidity. Very appealing flavors. We had opted for their Mondavi Table tasting that included a three-course lunch. After being seated we were given a taste of the 2022 Fumé Blanc. This wine comes from a small plot within the To Kalon Vineyard. Showing notes of vanilla and rounded flavors from its oak aging, the fruit is less forward than the previous wine. These were paired with a Citrus Salad of fennel, citrus,

Castelvetrano olives and Little Gem lettuce. The subtle flavors matched nicely with the two wines. Next up was a pair of Cabernet Sauvignons, 2022 Napa and 2021 Oakville. The Napa Cabernet is a blend of several vineyards, showing bright cherry berry flavors with smooth tannins. The Oakville, primarily from To Kalon, was more tannic, with leathery/tobacco notes. Delicious, but could use some aging. These were paired with an Amatriciana Pasta. Again, the pairing added depth and texture to both wines and was a subtle addition. This was followed by a hazelnut gelato with chocolate crumble. We had to stop taking refills as their generosity was wonderful.



Several tastings are available when you reserve. The Pioneer Tasting at \$60, basically the four wines as above, no food. The Visionary Tasting of six wines from their various estates at \$95 and the Legends tour and tasting (\$150) showcasing the reserve tier of wines. I highly recommend the food pairing tasting. Plenty of wine and food and a very reasonable price of \$95. You can wander about the grounds after and take in the changes to the grounds and buildings. It's nice to see this iconic property back in action!

A promotional poster for the St. Helena Historical Society event 'FINKO! WITH THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY!'. The poster features a man in a white shirt and glasses, smiling and holding a birdcage. The text on the poster includes the event name, date, time, and location. A QR code is also present in the bottom right corner.

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My Papa's Waltz

Theodore Roethke 1908 -1963

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

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