

A photograph of the Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota, showing the four large granite faces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. The monument is set against a clear blue sky, and the foreground shows some dark evergreen trees and rocky terrain.

# SJVLS

## SLAB & GAB

FEBRURAY 2026

Mount Rushmore  
Black Hills, South Dakota

# Slab and Gab

## President's Message:

There's something humbling about Mt. Rushmore.

Four faces carved into granite — not because they were perfect, but because they shaped a nation in lasting ways. The mountain stands as a reminder that legacy isn't loud in the moment. It's built slowly. Intentionally. With vision that stretches beyond a single season.

As I reflect on that image this month, I can't help but think about our own mountain — the San Joaquin Valley Lapidary Society.

Our club is not built of stone, but of people. Of volunteers who sweep the floors after everyone else leaves, instructors who patiently guide new hands at the saw, directors who quietly carry the administrative weight, and youth who remind us why all this matters for the future... of special members like Donna Rodriguez.

While mountains are carved by tools, legacies are carved by presence. By kindness. By contribution. By consistency.

Donna's imprint on this club will not fade — because the marks she left are in us.

Clubs like ours do not endure by accident. They endure because people choose to invest their time, their energy, and their care into something that will outlast them.

That is what Mt. Rushmore symbolizes. That is what Donna symbolizes for us.

February is often called the month of love — but I would call it the month of appreciation. Appreciation for those who came before us. Appreciation for those standing beside us now. And appreciation for the youth who will one day inherit what we are shaping today.

Our work this year is steady and intentional:

Strengthening our shop.  
Aligning with federation standards.  
Supporting youth engagement.  
Building outreach in the community.  
Ensuring our foundation is strong.  
Not flashy.  
Not frantic.  
Just steady.

Because mountains are not built in a day... they are revealed over time.

May we continue carving something worthy together.

With gratitude and respect,

President  
San Joaquin Valley Lapidary Society

President's Message
On The Cover: Mount Rushmore, Black Hills, South Dakota
Rose Quartz
Tribute to Donna
Birthday Spotlight: February
Rockin Recipes
Test Your Knowledge
Poetry Rocks: The Lost Jewel
Color and Chill
Whispering Whimsy – SJVLS Member Submitted Photography
Upcoming Gem and Mineral Shows
SJVLS Member Submitted Events
Board of Directors



Group Picture From Our Annual Camping Trip  
San Simeon Creek Camp Grounds 2025



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# ON THE COVER

## MOUNT RUSHMORE. BLACK HILLS, SOUTH DAKOTA

### HISTORY

Sculpted by Gutzon Borglum between 1927 and 1941, the cost of this project was roughly \$1 million dollars, with 90% of the mountain carved from solid granite, using dynamite. More than 400 workers removed 450,000 tons of rock, none of which perished due to the dangerous conditions, during the 14 years of construction.

Mount Rushmore features 60-foot faces of four United States Presidents. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln, representing the nation's founding, growth, preservation, and development. Declared complete on October 31, 1941, it represents the first 150 years of American History.

The monument is a massive testament to American History, attracting over 2 million visitors annually.

**George Washington**, the first President of the United States from 1789 to 1797, represents the "founding" of our country.

**Thomas Jefferson**, third President of the United States from 1801 to 1809, symbolizes the "growth" of the United States made possible by his purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803.

**Abraham Lincoln**, sixteenth President of the United States from 1861 to 1865, embodies the "preservation" of the nation in confronting the challenges of the Civil War and abolishing slavery.

**Theodore Roosevelt**, twenty-sixth President of the United States from 1901 to 1909, represents the "development" of the country because of his support of the construction of the Panama Canal.

Written By: Topher Coleman



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# Rose Quartz



In the spirit of St. Valentines Day, I thought that it would be appropriate to highlight the stone of universal love.

**Rose Quartz** is soft, delicate, and gentle in its energy. Its breathtaking pink shades have fascinated people for many years. This stunning gemstone gives emotional healing, deep compassion, and inner self love, to those who possess it.

The shades of **Rose Quartz** range from soft pink to dark pink-rose hue. It has titanium, manganese, or iron within the stone. Its crystal system is hexagonal is scale 7 on the Mohs.

**Rose Quartz** tells an ancient story. Some researchers and historians date beads back to around 7,000 B.C. and belongs to Mesopotamia. The Romans, Assyrians, and Greeks believed that it had magical and healing properties. Today, **Rose Quatrz** is seen as a timeless symbol of love in the world. It helps to open one's heart to all types of love, clarity and positivity. It balances trust and gives acceptance. It is also believed to enhance fertility and protect pregnancy.

Our world needs **Rose Quartz** to breathe, live, and enjoy the most powerful energy that is love. Keep it close to your heart and you shall never feel disconnected.



Written By: Topher Coleman

# Quartzsite



On December 11th, Bernie and I—with Lisa and Paula close behind—set out from Bakersfield under a blanket of dense winter fog, the kind that dulls color and shortens sightlines. The transformation began almost immediately. As we approached Tehachapi, visibility dropped even further, the fog thickening into something dramatic and immersive. Then, just as suddenly, we climbed above the cloud break.

The fog fell away beneath us, and we left it behind.

Beyond the pass, the Mojave Desert opened up in full contrast—turquoise skies, bright sun, and a sweeping change in scenery that felt almost ceremonial. The desert welcomed us with clarity and warmth, and the shift was more than visual. The entire drive became a conversation—about landscape and process, about geology and time, about what draws us again and again to places shaped by patience and pressure. Bernie and I talked prospecting opportunities, stone origins, and the quiet lessons the land offers to those willing to look closely.



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# QUARTZSITE

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We made a few stops along the way—for snacks, coffee, and even to scope out some metal garden art—before, almost without noticing, we found ourselves under the wide Arizona sky. From one moment to the next, it felt as though we'd stepped into a different rhythm altogether—one governed not by schedules or screens, but by stone, story, and discovery.

We arrived with enough time to make a preliminary pass-through Gem World and T-Rocks—both exceptional, though in very different ways. Gem World impressed with its sheer breadth: an entire warehouse filled wall to wall with material, offering endless possibilities. T-Rocks, by contrast, drew us in with its quirky, unique, and undeniably cool assortment of glass. Out in the open, mounds of specimens, glass, and trinkets stretched as far as the eye could see.

We wrapped up the first night with dinner before Bernie and I headed back out for a little late-night exploration—chatting with vendors as they readied their assortments for the days ahead. It felt like a quiet pre-show to the main event, less than a month away, and a reminder that in Quartzsite, the energy never truly shuts down.





# *The Joy Of The Hunt*



We made our way through some of the major vendors, including familiar favorites like Gem World and other staples on the main road, weaving easily between seasoned dealers and first-time sellers alike. Every table felt like its own lesson in geology, patience, and possibility. From the brick-and-mortar stores to the open lot vendors under canopies in the full radiance of the desert sun.

Along the way, we picked up small trinkets and curios—swap-meet style finds that weren't destined for the saw or the wheel but carried energy and inspiration all the same. Wandering those tables felt like a real-life treasure hunt, guided by instinct rather than lists. Bartering with some characters that felt like pirates of the desert.



We even carved out time for some true rockhounding, exploring nearby riverbeds where I discovered glowing stones that held their light for a moment after exposure to UV. We loaded up our vehicles with rocks that were possibly larger than we should've been picking up—and smiled the entire time.

By the end of each day, our pockets were heavier, our hands dusty, and our minds buzzing. We found materials we rarely see back home, colors that sparked new ideas, and inspiration that lingered long after the sun dipped below the horizon. And yes—there was even a brief scare when sirens rolled up behind us. No need to worry, though—it was fire patrol passing through. They slowed just long enough to check that we were okay, then continued on their way.

We took that as our cue to pack up and head out for dinner. This time, the group indulged my suggestion of Chinese food, so we made our way to the Stagecoach Restaurant. The food was delicious, everyone sampled my Thai tea, and we all ended up with quirky fortunes. We capped off the night with ice cream at one of the coolest little local spots—SnowBird Café & Ice Creamery. I ordered a Tiger’s Tail coffee drink—bold, unexpected, and indulgent in the best way—and even picked up a mug for Gerald back home.

It all felt like more than just dessert. It felt earned—after the shopping, the hounding, and a day spent chasing treasures under the desert sky.



## *What We Bring Back*

Of course, Quartzsite isn't just about rocks. Yes, we returned with new stones, specimens, and materials that will eventually find their way onto saws, wheels, and workbenches. Some will be sold at our different functions throughout the year. But the most valuable things we carried home weren't measured in pounds of rock.

We brought back little pieces of magic that will inspire those who witness it. Walking those endless rows of vendors, talking with miners and collectors, seeing material from every corner of the world—it reminds you how vast the lapidary community really is. Quartzsite is a meeting place for people who share the same quiet fascination with what the earth creates over millions of years.



Trips like this help fuel what we do as a society. The materials we find become teaching tools. The techniques we see spark new ideas. The stories we hear become the inspiration we pass on to the next curious rockhound who crosses our path. In many ways, Quartzsite feels like a giant classroom under the desert sun—one where the lessons come from the land itself.

And as we drove back toward California, our vehicles a little heavier and the sky slowly fading into winter haze again, one thought kept returning to me:  
The hunt never really ends.



There will always be another stone to discover, another place to explore, another story waiting in the dust. If this trip proved anything, it's that the spirit of rockhounding—the curiosity, the adventure, and the camaraderie—is alive and well.

The desert may hold the stones—but it's the people who give them meaning. So, next time, won't you oblige me and follow me to Quartzsite—our own little diamond in the rough?



*By: Cristian Baltazar*

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Donna Claire Rodriguez  
July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1941 - December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025



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# Donna Claire Rodriguez

## July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1941 - December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025

I met Donna Rodriguez in the summer of 2018 at a rock sale at a house near Calloway and Rosedale Hwy. It was my first rock sale, and I wasn't a member of SJVLS yet. Donna and RJ Cromwell were digging in boxes of rocks. I asked what they were looking for. They gave me a look like, what? As I knew nothing about rocks, they gave me a club business card and invited me to a meeting.

I went to some meetings and met a lot of fun rockhounds. We had club classes to make items to sell at our club events. She always brought me brownies. From that time on Donna and I went on many field trips together, sharing a tent and hotel rooms. We went to rock shows and our favorite of all was our trips to Quartzsite, AZ where we shopped for items for the club, and of course for ourselves and friends.

I learned a lot about rocks from Donna. Which ones polished the best, the different hardness. She shared her books about geology and rockhounding. When I think of her, I see her smile and remember the joy she got from teaching others what she knew about geology and rockhounding. She was born to teach.

There are some tribal beliefs that reach out to the spirits in times of need and communicate with them. They do not have a fear of death or of going to an underworld; they believe in a spirit in the sky where they are free of pain and suffering and move from this world to the next. A time of our not mourning. Others believe in an afterlife that resembles the living world but is more abundant and harmonious. Some view death as a transition rather than an end. The spirit of the deceased is believed to continue influencing the living and honor and remember those who have passed.

I want to believe these myths are a balance between life and death and that they will comfort me in my grieving for Donna. I'm hoping she is out there and guiding us in our journey just as she did when she was beside us.

I won't forget my friend Donna. She is still by my side.

Written by Paula Scheideman



# BIRTHDAY SPOTLIGHT

## February Birthstone



Amethyst is the most popular variety of quartz crystals that is considered the most powerful and protective stone. It is a semiprecious violet stone that is often used in jewelry and for healing purposes.

It has been sought after throughout the ages for its stunning colors and ability to stimulate the mind and emotions.

The beauty of Amethyst is evident whether the stone is in its natural state, cut or polished into jewels. It is the birthstone for Pisces and the February birthstone along with being the stone for the 6th anniversary of marriage. Amethyst is a powerful and protective stone that has a wide range of benefits.

Some of the healing properties and powers of Amethyst are below: Natural Tranquilizer, Spiritual Awareness, Enhances Sobriety, Insomnia relief, Hormone Production, Boosting the Immune System, Guards against psychic attack.

## Fun Facts about people born in February

- February born individuals tend to be known for their creativity and originality
- Many are independent thinkers who can be adventurous, witty and emotionally sensitive
- They have a quirky sense of humor
- Many February born people tend to be night owls who are more productive and creative in the late hours of the night.
- February born individuals are great problem solvers



## The Violet is February's birth flower

Violet flowers are small, five-petaled blooms from the Viola genus, prized for their beauty, fragrance, and versatility in gardens and floral arrangements

## SJVS February Birthdays

Paula Scheideman - Feb 4th

Karen Wood - Feb 5th

Marvin Neaback - Feb 29th



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# ROCKIN' RECIPES



## Easy Geode Cookies Recipe

### Cookie Dough Base

2  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups all purpose flour  
1 cup unsalted butter, softened  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar  
1 large egg  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
1 tsp baking powder  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp salt

### Colors & Decoration

Purple gel food coloring  
Blue gel food coloring  
1 cup blue rock candy crystals  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chocolate sprinkles (optional)

**Prepare Dough:** In a large bowl, cream together softened butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Beat in egg and vanilla extract until well combined. In a separate bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. Gradually add dry ingredients to wet ingredients, mixing until a soft dough forms.

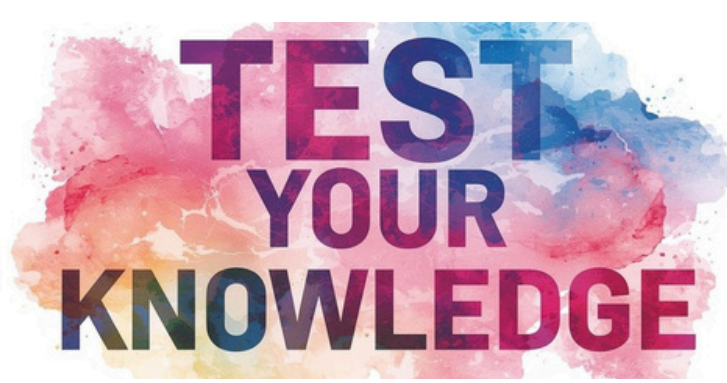
**Color the Dough:** Divide dough into three equal portions. Leave one portion plain (cream colored). Tint the second portion with purple gel food coloring, kneading until color is evenly distributed. Tint the third portion with blue gel food coloring. For a gradient effect, create a lighter purple by mixing less coloring into part of the purple dough.

**Assemble Geode Cookies:** Roll each colored dough into logs about 1 inch thick. Flatten slightly and layer them together (purple, blue, cream) to create striped layers. Press rock candy crystals into the center of the layered dough, then fold dough around to enclose the crystals completely. Roll gently to smooth. If desired, roll outer edge in chocolate sprinkles.

**Chill and Slice:** Wrap the dough log tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or until firm. This makes slicing easier and helps cookies hold their shape. Once chilled, slice into 1/4-inch thick rounds using a sharp knife. Wipe knife between cuts for clean edges.

**Bake To Perfection:** Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Line baking sheets with parchment paper. Place cookie slices 2 inches apart on prepared sheets. Bake for 10-12 minutes, just until edges are set but not browned. The centers should look slightly underdone. Cool on baking sheet for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

**Mastering the Geode Cookie Technique:** Creating perfect geode cookies is all about patience and proper layering technique. After dividing and coloring your dough, work with each portion individually to create smooth, even logs. The key is pressing the layers together firmly enough that they'll hold during slicing, but gently enough that the colors remain distinct. When embedding the rock candy, create a slight channel down the center of your layered dough and nestle the crystals in, then carefully wrap the dough around them, pinching seams closed. The dough should completely encase the crystals with no gaps. The chilling step is absolutely crucial and cannot be rushed. A minimum of one hour in the refrigerator allows the dough to firm up completely, making clean slicing possible. For the cleanest slices, use a very sharp knife and clean it between each cut - this prevents color transfer and ensures each cookie has crisp, defined layers. Bake at the lower end of the time range and watch carefully; the difference between perfectly tender cookies and overdone ones is just a minute or two. The cookies will look slightly underdone in the center when you remove them, but they'll continue to set as they cool.



## Rocks & Minerals Word Scramble

Unscramble the letters to solve the puzzle!

1. ESAHL \_\_\_\_\_
2. UTZATRQEI \_\_\_\_\_
3. BAISOIDN \_\_\_\_\_
4. TIESNLMEO \_\_\_\_\_
5. HILATE \_\_\_\_\_
6. PSAEDFRL \_\_\_\_\_
7. CACIETL \_\_\_\_\_
8. MUSPYG \_\_\_\_\_
9. ENNTDSOSA \_\_\_\_\_
10. TBASLA \_\_\_\_\_
11. DMLOEOIT \_\_\_\_\_
12. CMAI \_\_\_\_\_
13. REYPTI \_\_\_\_\_
14. HCSIST \_\_\_\_\_
15. RTIGEAN \_\_\_\_\_
16. REBLAM \_\_\_\_\_
17. EOEAGCRTLOMN \_\_\_\_\_
18. LTESA \_\_\_\_\_
19. CEUPIM \_\_\_\_\_
20. ISGSEN \_\_\_\_\_

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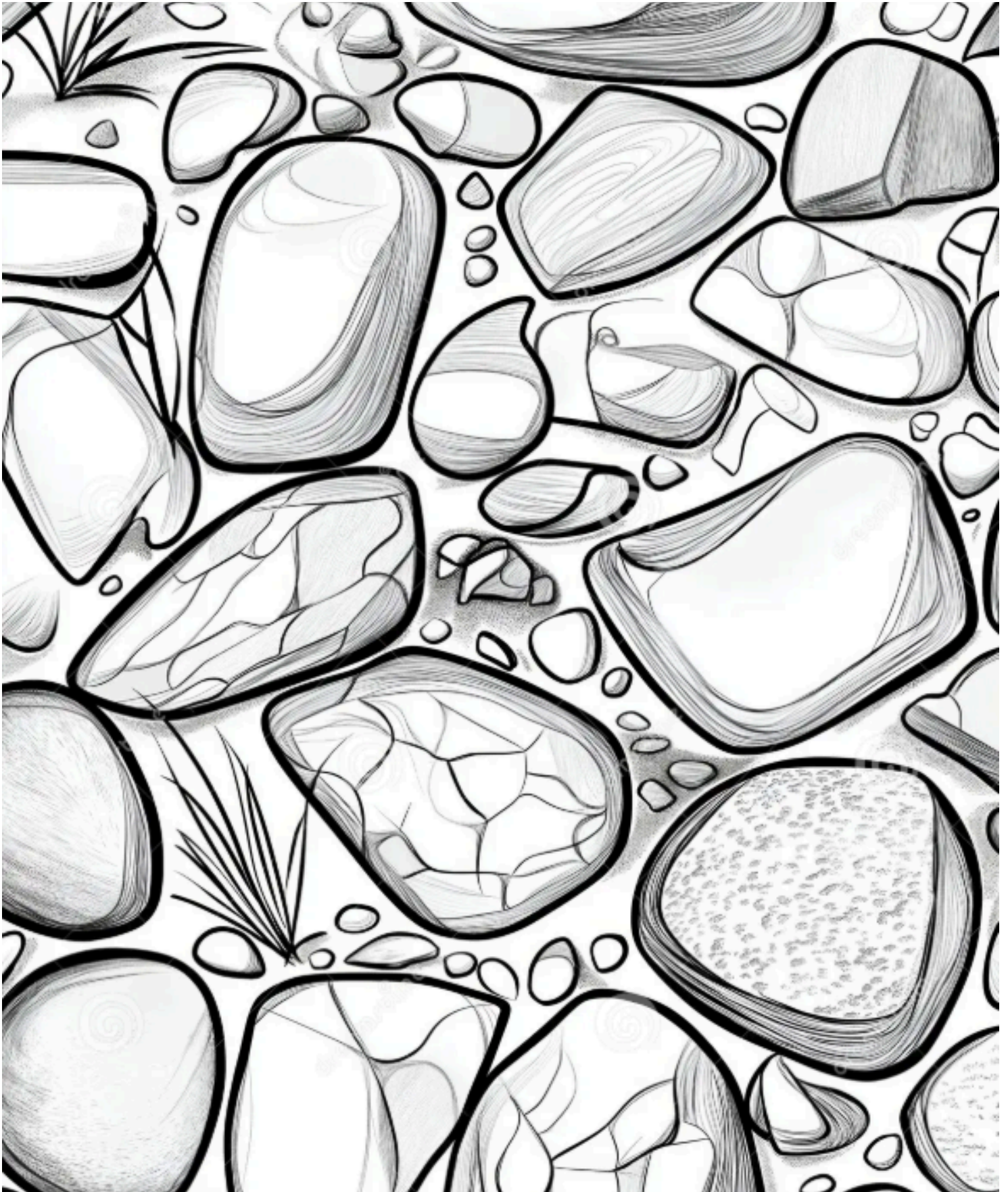
# *The Lost Jewel*

*by: Emily Dickinson*



I held a Jewel in my fingers—  
And went to sleep—  
The day was warm, and winds were prosy—  
I said "Twill keep'—  
I woke—and chid my honest fingers,  
The Gem was gone—  
And now, an Amethyst remembrance  
Is all I own—

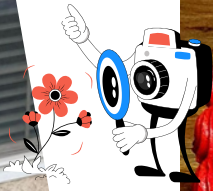
# Color & Chill



# The Whispering Whimsy

Pictures taken by SJVLS Members

Pictures submitted by Jan Lockhart, Michelle Coleman and Lisa Witthans and Topher



Submit yours to: [tophercoleman@hotmail.com](mailto:tophercoleman@hotmail.com)

# Upcoming Gem and Mineral Shows

Stoddard Wells Rockhound Tailgate – Mar 13-15, 2026 – Dale Evens Parkway & Stoddard Wells Rd, Apple Valley, CA

Lake Elsinore Gem & Mineral Society – Mar 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026 – Lake Elsinore, CA

Turlock Rock & Gem Show – Mar 14-15, 20256 – Turlock, CA

Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Society Rough and Cut Sale -- Mar 15, 2026 -- Fallbrook, CA

The Central Valley 6th Annual Gem & Mineral Show -- Mar 20-22, 2026 -- Clovis, CA

Santa Clara Gem and Mineral Society Annual Gem and Mineral Show -- March 21-22, 2026 -- San Jose, CA

Wind Wolves Preserve Spring Nature Festival -- Mar 21-22, 2026 -- Bakersfield, CA

South Bay Lapidary & Mineral Society Show – Mar 28-29, 2026 – Ken Miller Civic Center, Torrance, CA

Antelope Valley Gem & Mineral Club's Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show -- Mar 28-29, 2026 -- Lancaster, CA

Lemoore Gem, Mineral, and Jewelry Show -- Mar 28-29, 2026 -- Lemoore, CA

Calaveras Gem and Mineral Society's Gem & Jewelry Show & Sale – Mar. 28-29, 2026 – Angels Camp, CA

# SJVLS MEMBER SUBMITTED EVENTS



Izzy Foster and the Flyboys  
 Saturday March, 14<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm.  
 Lenthwise Brewery, The Pub at 2900  
 Calloway Drive, Bakersfield CA 93312  
 Listen to some great music, eat, drink and  
 have a good evening out.



Buena Vista Museum Rock , Mineral and Fossil Sale.  
 March 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> from 10 am to 4 pm  
 2018 Chester Ave, Bakersfield CA 93301

Looking for unique gifts or wanting to add to your collection?  
 This event is just for you. Everything from raw to polished  
 rocks, minerals and fossils.

There's even a little something for the kids.  
 This will defiantly bring out your inner rock hound or turn you  
 into a collector!

Two days filled with beautiful rocks, minerals and fossils of all  
 kinds and from all over the world.



Come enjoy some Celtic  
 Music at Dagny's Coffee  
 Shop on the 4<sup>th</sup>  
 Wednesday of every  
 month from  
 6-8 pm.  
 1600 20<sup>th</sup> Street

Sbumit your event to Michelle Coleman at chellecoleman.mc@gmail.com



## Succulent Nests Workshop

Date and Time  
 Mar 26, 2026 · Thu, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (PDT)

Add to My Calendar

Address  
 Grumpy's Brewing Co.  
 4205 Resnik Ct #3, Bakersfield, CA 93313, USA

ARTS & CULTURE



## Info & Tickets

square.link

View website



Scan to view on  
 mobile phone



## Wildflowers Viewing - Tejon Ranch - Antelope Valley

Date and Time  
 Apr 4, 2026 · Sat, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (PDT)

Add to My Calendar

Address  
 Tejon Ranch (Exact location will be provided to registrants)  
 300th St W, California 93536, USA

## Info & Tickets

View website



Scan to view on  
 mobile phone

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