

# inside napa valley

Spring/Summer 2024

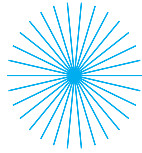
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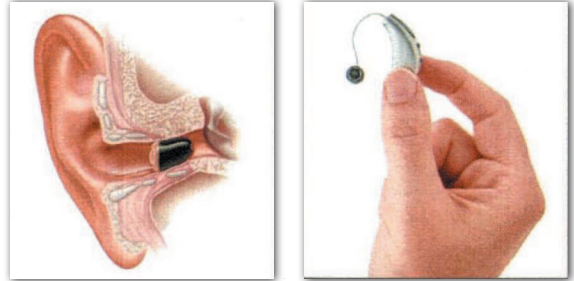
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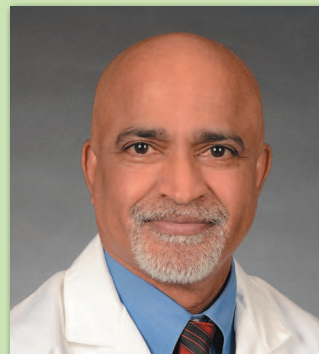
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## Celebrating families across the valley

**SARAH DOWLING**  
*Special Projects Editor*

**E**arlier this year I was sent an email with the news that Napa had been added to a top 10 list by the review website Yelp. My mind instantly went to topics more akin to the top 10 wineries or top 10 restaurants.



**SARAH DOWLING**

But among the top 10 family-friendly travel destinations? That, sadly, isn't the first thing that comes to mind for the region.

This accolade — the city of Napa specifically was ranked No. 2 in the U.S. — had many on our staff and many of our readers puzzled. What do Napa Valley families actually ... well, do? How do they spend their time when the

chief product of the region is made for those age 21 and older?

This edition of Inside Napa Valley offered our staff and crew of freelancers a chance to dive into this question. Is the Napa Valley really family-friendly? Is the Yelp designation accurate?

Katie DeBenedetti shines a light on dozens of family-friendly spots in the Napa Valley, including the Rockzilla climbing gym, the American Canyon Wetlands, Connolly Ranch Education Center, Calistoga's Old Faithful Geyser, di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art and more. Kevin Courtney steps inside The Grape Escape, Napa's escape room where "participants' abilities to work together, solve puzzles, decipher clues and complete challenges are tested in entertaining

ways." Meanwhile, columnist Chloe Moody answers the question "What do Napa's young adults do for fun?" while Theresa Gonzalez shares her parental perspective on a recent trip to Safari West in nearby Sonoma County.

This magazine is by no means a full exploration of what makes the Napa Valley a family-friendly destination, or perhaps more importantly, a family-friendly place to live. But it is our hope that what is shared between these pages offers a new perspective on the region, one that is welcoming of families of all stripes. Please enjoy our Spring/Summer 2024 issue.

**On the Cover:** Otzlee Gray, 8, climbs a wall at Rockzilla indoor rock climbing gym in Napa during his birthday party. Photo by Nick Otto.





Nick Otto, Register

Mathew Commander, a sophomore on the Napa Valley College golf team, prepares to hit on one of the simulator bays at Purefect Golf Club in Napa on Tuesday, April 2.

# New **GAMIE** in town

Indoor golf club for kids, adults opening in Napa

**JENNIFER HUFFMAN**

A recent Yelp news story that named Napa as the second most family-friendly travel destination in the U.S. had many locals reacting — in disbelief. Most said it’s the exact opposite — there’s not nearly enough for children and teenagers to do in the Napa Valley.

Three Napa locals — Zack Sims, Kevin Anderson and Brandon Duncan — aim to do something about that. They’re launching a new “game” in town: Purefect Golf Club.

The indoor golf facility features three hitting bays equipped with “full-swing” simulators, golf clinics and individual lessons “with a heavy focus on growing junior golf in Napa,” said Sims.

Located at 2480 Oak St., Unit B, Purefect Golf Club officially opened on April 21. Directors were still adding finishing touches and final pieces of equipment in early April.

Sims is the son of Tom Sims, director of golf at Napa Valley

Golf balls are seen on the putting surface of Purefect Golf Club in Napa.





Country Club. The entrepreneur most recently returned to Napa after working as an assistant golf professional at Muirfield Village Golf Club in Ohio. He's also caddied for Sahith Theegala, a professional golfer who won last year's Fortinet Championship at Napa's Silverado Resort and Spa.

Sims, 30, said he quickly realized Napa was lacking an indoor golf facility for training, especially for juniors.

"I wanted to create a golf community where we're introducing kids, but also adults, to golf," said Sims. Golf is such an individual game, he said. "It's nice to have a group or a place where people can practice, bounce ideas off each other, build new friendships and get a taste for golf."

Duncan, 32, is the director of instruction at Purefect Golf Club. The golf pro taught for 12 years at Silverado and currently teaches at Napa Valley Country Club.

The two have known each other since they were in middle school. Golf has made a big difference in their lives, said Duncan. "It's molded us. We want to be able ... to give that back to our community" and encourage more kids to learn to golf, he said.

Anderson found the commercial space on Oak Street for the new facility. His business, DN Anderson Construction, is right across the driveway from the new Purefect Golf Club. Anderson built all the golf bays and the entire interior, and invested in the business, explained Sims.

"Without Kevin and his team, this would not have been possible," he said. "They did a great job."

The 2,000-square-foot facility features the two indoor hitting bays to one side and a third "teaching" bay on the other.

Besides hitting and training, Purefect Golf Club will host elite nights, off-campus



Purefect Golf Club's co-owner Zack Sims prepares a course on one of the simulator bays.

Nick Otto Photos, Register



Mathew Commander, a sophomore on the Napa Valley College golf team, plays a round at Purefect Golf Club in Napa on Tuesday, April 2.

retreats, golf events with members, and team-building group rentals and clinics.

Kids' clinics would include eight to 12 youths, playing three days a week for four weeks. Age groups range from 7 to 12 and 13 to 17.

Sims and Duncan said they can help both kids who aspire to play in high school and those aspiring to play at the college level.

Sims said if it weren't for a golf scholarship to Holy Names University in Oakland, he likely wouldn't have gone to college.

"It's tough getting to college from high school golf," he said.

"And so we would definitely be helping (students) get to the next level, whether their next level is high school or college or pro golf."

While it's not a retail golf store, Purefect Golf Club will sell merchandise and some equipment and can order other kinds of gear. The business will also offer club repair, such as new grips.

Another part of this equation is the cost, since golf can definitely be expensive, according to Duncan.

"We don't want kids to not be able to play golf because it costs too much," he said. "We

### Purefect Golf Club

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don't want them to turn down golfing because they didn't have the guidance (or) because they couldn't afford it."

It costs \$50 to rent a hitting bay for one hour at Purefect Golf Club and \$10 for additional players. Up to four can play at a time.

Junior golf lessons are \$50 per hour at this new club. Monthly memberships will be \$175 and include seven hours of hitting per month. There is also a discount for buying an annual membership.

Duncan said he played many different sports growing up and that it's important to bring young and new players into the game.

"Golf was different than the rest because it taught you a different type of responsibility and independence," he said. "It creates a little bit more maturity in the kids. So that's why I fell in love with it."

Golf offers variety as well. "Every course you play, every





Co-Owner Zack Sims, left, and Brandon Duncan, director of instruction, are seen at Purefect Golf Club on Tuesday, April 2.

Nick Otto, Register

hole you play, will never be the same twice,” said Duncan. “The soccer field is always the same size. The hoop is always the same size. The court’s always the same size. (With golf) there’s a lot of variables, a lot of creativity.”

Sims said golf also teaches accountability. “You keep your own score; there’s no referee. And there’s also manners; you have to wait for your turn; you have to fix your ball marks. It teaches you stuff that other sports don’t.”

Not to mention seeing new places. “I’ve traveled all over the world playing this game,” said Sims.

“Without golf, I definitely wouldn’t be the same person I am today. It’s taught me a lot about myself and creating this community.”

Yes, the team could have opened a bigger indoor golf facility at a lower rent in cities such as Fairfield, Vacaville or Sacramento.

“But again, it’s going away from the locals that we want,”

**Video:** For a sneak peek, point your smart phone camera at the QR code and tap the link. [NEWSVU](#)

said Duncan. “We want to help these kids in this town. We don’t want them to have to drive an hour and a half to come see us. We’re local, and we want to be local. We love Napa.”

Sims also addressed the Yelp claim – and the swift local pushback.

Compared to other communities, “there’s not much for kids going on” in Napa, agreed Sims. “But I do think with this, we’ll be able to maybe start a trend of helping kids out, instead of just helping wineries out or tourists out. So yeah, this will be a good building block for Napa.”

One very kid-friendly activity is hosting birthday parties.

For \$499, as many as 12 young golfers can have a two-hour party at the facility. That includes two instructors, golf and other games, said Sims. ■

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A customer is silhouetted in the store front window of Sugar, Spice & Ice as they leave on Feb. 8.

Nick Otto, Register

# In the pink

**Sugar, Spice & Ice is part cookie company,  
part old-fashioned soda shop**

**HILARY WENDEL**

**A** brief advisory to readers with a sweet tooth before you read about the latest addition to the Napa gourmet scene: this article may cause severe cookie cravings for a giant (about the size of a hockey puck), fresh out of the oven, chewy, gooey, loaded and layered mega cookie.

The cookies at Sugar, Spice & Ice have enticing names like “Worms and Dirt” (a triple chocolate cookie with chocolate buttercream, Oreos and





*Nick Otto, Register*

**The Cookies & Cream, Smores and Iced Sugar cookies are seen at Sugar, Spice & Ice in Napa.**

gummy worms) or “The S’mores” (a chocolate chip cookie topped with Nutella and toasted marshmallows) among other sweet offerings at this new female-owned business.

The shop is tucked into the parking lot of a commercial center at 2526 Jefferson Ave., conveniently located to catch commuters and high school foot traffic.

In addition to the oversized cookies (the “Sugar, Spice” of the business name), they offer naturally-flavored, customizable sodas, lotus energy drinks, sugar-free refreshers and lemonades (the “Ice” portion of the business).

Brookelyn de Jesus and Tana Tavizon are the partners behind the new concept, a cross between a highly Instagrammable cookie company and an old-fashioned soda shop.

“Our décor is meant to be a modern take on an old-fashioned candy and soda shop.” The heavenly bakery smell, dusty rose tile and walls the color of pink frosting make it hard to believe that this used to be a shoe repair.

Tavizon explained, “We still get the occasional wanderer looking to get shoes fixed, and we point them to the new location.”

Though the business only opened

in December, “coincidentally on National Cookie Day,” Tavizon added, the word of their opening is spreading fast, especially among Napa High School students, who have already figured out that they can use the Toast App on their phones to order ahead for a pick-me-up (helpful since they only have a 30-minute break at lunch).

Repeat customers have been sharing their discovery and passion for these sweet treats on social media, considerably boosting business.

“We have one kid who I think we need to put on our marketing team. He has been coming in every single





Sugar, Spice & Ice owner Brookelyn de Jesus is seen helping a customer.

Nick Otto, Register

day and every day with a different friend,” Tavizon said.

The bakery is counter service only, with just a few chairs outside, but it provides a much-needed spot for young people to meet and socialize. It has already become a popular hangout for fans to gather before any Big Game — both Napa High and Vintage colors are warmly welcomed. The students get discounts if they are in their spirit wear on Big Game day.

As grads of both schools (De Jesus is a Vintage alum while Tavizon graduated from Napa High), they are pleased to offer a neutral meeting ground for the teens. They couldn’t be happier about providing a safe place to this community in Napa that they see as underserved.

“In Napa, there are a lot of wineries, but there are not a lot of places for the kids,” said Tavizon.

Tavizon explained that “Brookelyn is the extrovert,” the friendly face behind the counter (and “the mastermind behind the daily reels

on Instagram”), serving up the fluffy eight-ounce cookies and ice concoctions with a smile, while Tavizon is behind the scenes as the bookkeeper and baker, delivering still-warm cookies to the front as fast as she can bake them.

“In Napa, there are a lot of wineries, but there are not a lot of places for the kids”

Tana Tavizon

“I drop the kids (ages 9 and 12) off at school and get to work immediately baking. As an introvert, I am happiest in the back, but sometimes I pop into the front to help Brookelyn with the rush,” said Tavizon.

Most cookies are sold out by the

end of the day (the new business is already averaging about 100 customers a day). Still, if any are left, they hand-deliver them to neighboring businesses, senior citizen homes or the fire station.

“We always take care of the guys at Paradise Lost Tattoo, next door, who are some of our best customers,” said Tavizon. De Jesus and Tavizon even named a cookie after them, “The Paradise Lost” — a chocolate chip cookie with marshmallows and rainbow sprinkles folded in.

Locals may recognize these two hard workers. The duo behind the “pink sugar shack” (as they privately refer to it) met years ago at Celadon. Tana and her husband, Joel Tavizon (both with long and respectable culinary resumes), took over Celadon nine years ago, and de Jesus started working there as a hostess while pursuing a psychology major at a university.

She quickly made herself indispensable to the owners and, upon





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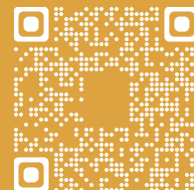
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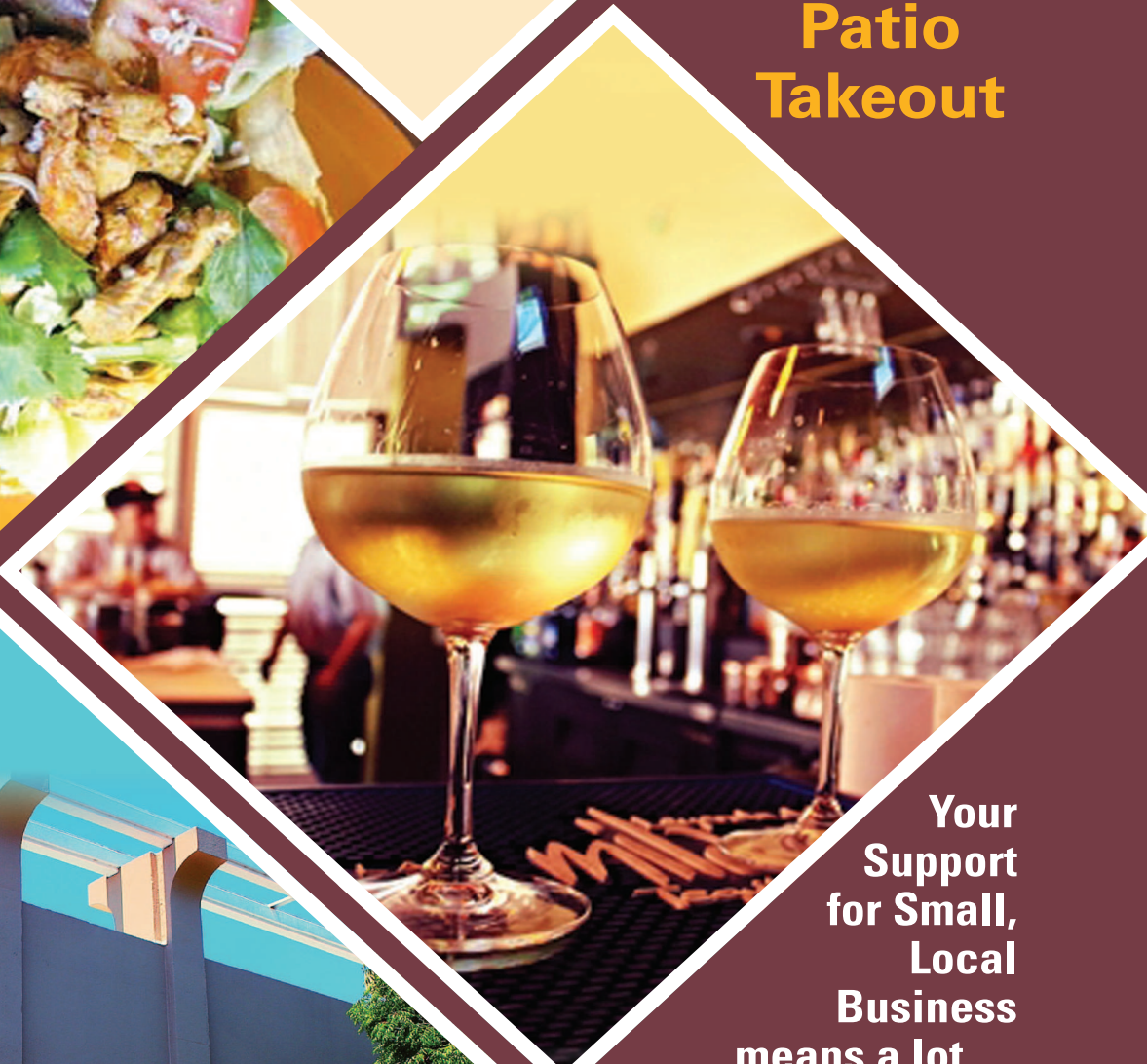


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**The iced drinks Razzle Dazzle and Just Peachy are seen at Sugar, Spice & Ice in Napa**

*Nick Otto, Register*

graduation, decided she enjoyed restaurant life so much that she abandoned her plan to go to graduate school and became a full-time member of the Celadon team. After making her mark at Celadon, de Jesus was ready for a new challenge, and she approached her friend and mentor with the idea of partnering at Sugar, Spice & Ice.

Tavizon had no hesitation in accepting the offer — and it has been full steam ahead since.

“The concept of a soda shop is already popular in places like Austin and Salt Lake City,” where de Jesus grew up through 5th grade, “but it’s something that has been missing in Napa,” de Jesus observed.

Napa has its share of sweet-tooth consumers who are ready for the concept. Lines are sometimes out the door, and cookies are snatched up (and consumed) faster than Tavizon can bake them. They invested in

a special “nugget” crushed ice machine (for the specialty drinks), and “we splurged on a double convection oven.”

They only buy high-quality ingredients, like Guittard chocolate, local sweet unsalted butter, and Malden sea salt. Still, they had to cut costs on other items they wanted. A larger commercial-sized mixer is the first item on the wish list, which would allow Tavizon to create larger batch sizes.

While they always offer the classics (such as chocolate chip, oatmeal, oatmeal butterscotch, and gluten-free vegan peanut butter), they also have rotating unique flavors for the holidays and even experiment with customers’ suggestions, like the Peanut Butter Lover, which was so popular, it sold out immediately. The giant cookie costs \$4 to \$5.50 but can easily be shared with a friend or two.

A few varieties of “minis” are also for sale. The drinks menu is equally creative and expansive and boasts the “Levi-osa” — based on Harry

Potter’s butterbeer, as well as Tavizon’s favorite “Dreamsicle Creamsicle,” a cream soda “made from orange soda, vanilla, and milk that tastes like an orange creamsicle popsicle.”

A decadent hot cocoa, croissant waffles and blended coffee drinks are in development, and other themed cookies will be announced on their Instagram page. They are planning on a wholesale and catering offshoot in the future, but in the meantime, online orders are available.

*Info: 2526 Jefferson St., Napa; open Monday-Saturday from 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; [instagram.com/sugarspiceicenapa](https://www.instagram.com/sugarspiceicenapa). ■*





*Nick Otto, Register*

Chase Kelly, 18, Mya Oro, 17, and Leah Oro, 12, watch a safety video before trying to solve the Temple of Razum escape room at the Grape Escape in Napa on Sunday, April 14.

# Planning a 'GRAPPE' escape





*Nick Otto, Register*

**Chase Kelly, 18, Mya Oro, 17, and Leah Oro, 12, try and solve the Temple of Razum escape room at the Grape Escape in Napa on Sunday, April 14.**

## **KEVIN COURTNEY**

**T**ucked among the conventional array of businesses in south Napa's River Park Shopping Center is a one-of-a-kind place that takes customers deep into realms of immersive fantasy.

With the clock ticking down, participants' abilities to work together, solve puzzles, decipher clues and complete challenges are tested in entertaining ways.

Welcome to The Grape Escape.

Shannon and Rick Johnson founded the business in 2019 as escape room mania swept America. In November, a family with deep Napa roots bought it with plans to introduce new room themes and launch a mobile version.

The new owners — John and Teresa Mack, daughter Alisha Walston, son Corey Mack and his wife Kaela — now live in Placer County where they operate a construction company and a preschool.



*Nick Otto, Register*

**Leah Oro, 12, tries to solve a puzzle in the Temple of Razum escape room at the Grape Escape.**



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*Nick Otto Photos, Register*

**Chase Kelly, 18 and Mya Oro, 17, try and solve a puzzle in the Temple of Razum escape room at the Grape Escape in Napa on Sunday, April 14.**

How does a Napa escape room fit into this mix? “We wanted a family business where the adults and the children could be involved,” said Teresa.

Cory and Kaela were the catalyst. “We’ve been going to escape rooms since we were in the womb,” Kaela said with hyperbole.

A fan of puzzles and board games, Cory said he dreams of someday owning an “escape room empire.” “They’re fun, they’re entertaining, I can’t get enough,” he said. The Grape Escape is step one toward achieving that goal.

Visitors have three choices: an Indiana Jones-style jungle adventure, a dystopian steampunk casino whose owner aspires to global control or Uncle Tick Tock’s Circus where participants must solve challenges to win a mysterious prize. Some enthusiasts return until they have accomplished all three.

The Grape Escape is popular for birthday parties, date nights, wedding events



**Chase Kelly, 18 and Mya Oro, 17, try and solve a puzzle in the Temple of Razum escape room at the Grape Escape in Napa.**





**Chase Kelly, 18, Mya Oro, 17, and Leah Oro, 12, try and solve the Temple of Razum escape room on Sunday, April 14.**

**Left: Mya Oro, 17, chooses a costume before entering Temple of Razum escape room.**

*Nick Otto Photos, Register*





Nick Otto, Register

The new owners of Grape Escape, an escape room entertainment venue in Napa pose for a photograph on Sunday, April 14.

and team building, Teresa said. Children and adults contribute according to their talents, she said.

When “locked” in a themed room for an hour, it’s surprising how real the challenges become, Cory said. Participants leave “feeling super accomplished about a made-up story, like they just saved the world. Most who go in hesitant come out having had a blast,” he said.

If a player walks away disappointed, usually “they’re more mad with the team, not the room,” Alisha said.

Escape rooms occupy an important cultural niche, Teresa said. “People are looking for things to do beside just eating and drinking. This is something people can do and not just sit there.”

“People want to do something in Napa besides drink wine,” Alisha said. “They want a sober experience with their kids.”

First-timers can arrive with a range of anxieties. “People think you’ll be claustrophobic. That’s not the case,” said Cory.

“We’re not putting you in a casket,” said Alisha. Yes, rooms are “locked,” but

participants can unlock them by pressing a button.

There are no scary people jumping out at you, Teresa said. “We do not have live actors.”

Each room is overseen by a game master who monitors developments on video screens. “We can see you and hear you at all times,” said Kaela. If a group hits a dead end, the game master can offer clues to get the search back on track. About half of all groups manage to escape using clues before time expires.

Escape rooms hold a maximum of eight people. When all three rooms are in play, 22 people can be accommodated. Prices start at \$45 per person but are less for larger groups.

Participants can select from an array of costumers tied to each room’s theme. “It makes your team photo afterward much more fun,” Alisha said.

The Grape Escape now offers food with after parties. Partnering restaurants can provide tri-tip dinners, charcuterie, even sushi, Teresa said.

The Grape Escape recently bought a tented escape room to take into the community. Fairs and farmers markets are all possible locations, she said.

Escape boxes are another new offering. After completing a room challenge, groups can wind down by figuring out how to unlock a box and do the puzzles inside, Teresa said.

The Grape Escape expects to replace one of the themed escape rooms with a wholly original challenge later this year. John and his son Cory, who have a construction company in Lincoln, will build it out.

Alisha is charged with promotion on social media, with deals popping up frequently. This spring The Grape Escape offered a chance to win two three-day passes to BottleRock.

*The Grape Escape, located at 1345 W. Imola Ave. behind Rite Aid, is closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays, which are reserved for special events. For more info, go to [escaperoomnapa.com](http://escaperoomnapa.com) or call 707-927-3759.* ■





Nick Otto, Register

Owner Paul Thoren hangs a painting at Gallery 1870 in downtown Napa on Jan. 10.

# Fine art and family

SARAH DOWLING

**N**estled between the upscale eateries, clothing boutiques and tasting rooms that make up Napa's First Street Plaza is a gallery with nearly three decades of history.

That history, however, was collected during Gallery 1870's 28-year stay in Yountville. The gallery moved to downtown Napa, opening its doors at 1270 First St. in August. The relocation was prompted by planned renovations to the Yountville location, which would leave the gallery without a home for an extended period.

"There was no space for us," Gallery 1870 owner Paul Thoren explained.

Thoren — who owns the gallery with his wife, Kathy, and daughter, Kassia Kilgore — said that rather than wait for the

original space to be finished the team decided to look around for a new location. The result was a "pleasant space," Thoren said, located behind the Archer Hotel. The 2,800-square-foot storefront was once home to Tommy Bahama and lululemon.

How the father-daughter team got involved in the art gallery space has a long history of its own. It all happened, Kilgore explained, "by chance."

Kilgore had an internship with Gallery 1870 while attending UC Davis. The previous gallery owner needed more help and Kilgore suggested her then-retired father. Thoren spent years working in big box retail and when his daughter "needed backup," he agreed to help out.

And he never left.

"You meet people from all over the world," Thoren said of his gallery experience. He added that he enjoyed the

camaraderie of the arts.

As Kilgore went back to college and pursued other things, Thoren remained at the gallery. And when the previous owners decided to move on, Thoren made the decision to buy Gallery 1870 in 2005. Kilgore returned as co-owner, working side-by-side with her father, surrounded by beautiful works of art.

Now, the pair are prepared to usher in a new history in downtown Napa. With it, the gallery's tagline was updated to "Fine Art Napa" to differentiate the new iteration of the gallery from its roots in Yountville. The number 1870 reflects the historic building that once housed the gallery — the V Marketplace, which was built in 1870.

Gallery 1870—Fine Art Napa features works from about 25 different artists with a range of specialties. Most artists are from





*Nick Otto, Register*  
**A sculpture by artist Mario Chiodo is seen at Gallery 1870 in downtown Napa.**

the Napa Valley, but others are based in other parts of Northern California. Many of the artists have been with the gallery for over 20 years.

“Many of them are like family to us,” Kilgore said.

Turning the previous retail space into a gallery was easier than one might think. Thoren explained that the only real addition to the space was the vertical grid walls used to display paintings throughout. It was a very quick turnaround creating the new Gallery 1870, Thoren indicated.

Asked whether the entire collection was on display, Thoren laughed.

“There is no gallery that has enough walls,” he said, noting that many of the pieces were in storage.

What is on display is an “exciting mix of contemporary fine art,” according to the gallery’s website. Kilgore gave a tour of the collection during a recent visit, starting from the front entrance and turning right. This was to mimic the typical flow

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Nick Otto Photos, Register

Owner Kassia Kilgore adjusts a painting in the window of Gallery 1870 in downtown Napa as two pedestrians walk by on Jan. 10.





of traffic in the gallery, she said.

The works — all of which are available for sale — include the hyper-realistic watercolor wine bottles of Eric Christensen. Kilgore called him a “master of reflection,” referring to the wine glasses glistening in Christensen’s “Worth the Wait.”

On a nearby wall, the contemporary realism of Gail Chandler offers a new take on some familiar items. Many of Chandler’s paintings showcase stacks of books and cooking instruments. Kilgore spoke of “The Games of Life,” a stack of board games representing different phases of life — The Dating Game and Newlywed Game among them, along with Candyland and Trouble. The games, Kilgore pointed out, have different stages of wear and tear. The corner of Operation is held together by Scotch tape.

One of the gallery’s newest artists, Vaso Peritos of San Francisco, uses various pour techniques and movements of the canvas

to create vibrant imagery. Kilgore noted Vaso embraces a mixed-media approach, using coffee beans and salt among other things on some pieces.

While Gallery 1870 features a mix of art styles, there is also variation among the artists themselves.

things up.”

Gallery 1870—Fine Art Napa is located at 1270 First St., behind the Archer Hotel in downtown Napa. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday—Monday and Tuesdays by appointment. For more information, visit [gallery1870.com](http://gallery1870.com). ■



Nick Otto, Register

A pedestrian walks past Gallery 1870 in downtown Napa.



**PHOTOS:** For more from Gallery 1870, point your smartphone camera at the QR code and tap the link. **NEWSVU**



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Nick Otto, Register

Kelly Redmond, left, and Angie Redmond co-owners of the Napa Cosmetology Collective pose for a photograph on Friday, Feb. 2.

# One roof, a spectrum of services

Beauty school, salon open in Napa

**KEVIN COURTNEY**

**N**apa's former Sears outlet on Soscol Avenue has undergone a radical makeover.

Instead of displays of refrigerators and washers,

the site at 1701 Soscol Ave. is home to a relocated beauty salon, The Parlor, and a new cosmetology school, Napa Cosmetology Collective.

The Collective opened with its first class in November, preparing students

for state cosmetologist, esthetician and manicurist licenses.

Napa once had five beauty schools, with the last one closing several years ago, said Collective co-owner Angie Redmond. This created a local need for a new one to



train the next generation of stylists, she said. Her staff includes instructors who once taught at Le Melange in Napa, she said.

The Collective's black and white décor gives off a "boutique vibe," said co-owner Kelly Redmond. Both the salon and the school are committed to "inclusivity and diversity," she said. "There's a vibe that makes people feel inclusive."

The school's website sharpens this message, saying, "This isn't your grandma's beauty school, although we do love your grandma and welcome her in as well."

Instead of playing easy-listening "spa" music, the Collective bathes students and customers with songs by The Clash, Miley Cyrus, Chris Stapleton and Gwen Stefani, Angie said. "We definitely have a very dynamic atmosphere."

The school's owners are "ex-wives" who are co-parenting a daughter. Angie, who grew up in Napa, brings two decades of experience in cosmetology, while Kelly comes from a career in the corporate world.

"We want to build a future for our daughter, so we're on the same page for everything," Angie said.

Opening a cosmetology school is no easy task, the co-owners said. There are bureaucratic hoops to jump through, with California regulating every aspect of the curriculum. From conception to opening, "It's been a long two years," Kelly said.

Co-locating a school with a salon is unusual, which is why the owners use the name "collective" to describe the spectrum of services under one roof, Angie said. "Most schools don't have a professional hair salon as part of it, with the instructors actually working in the field," she said.

Clients seeking salon services have the option of making an appointment with a professional stylist, a student supervised by a professional or a recently licensed "junior stylist," Angie said.

Services are priced according to the expertise of the stylist. Haircuts by a student range from \$12 to \$28, Angie said. Coloring starts at \$25. Haircuts by a professional run to \$85.

"People can kind of name their price, and we match them with a stylist," Angie said.

The Parlor, which serves women, men and children, has a policy of "non-gender pricing," casting aside a tradition of salons charging women more than a



Nick Otto, Register

Co-owner of the Napa Cosmetology Collective Angie Redmond teaches a class on hair cutting.



Nick Otto, Register

Instructor Krista Howell chats with a student at the Napa Cosmetology Collective.

similar service for a man. "Hair is hair," said Angie.

Instead of classifying hair as men's or women's, the Collective prefers such descriptors as "short, long, harder, softer, masculine, feminine," Angie said.

Cosmetology students receive 1,000 hours of instruction in hair, skin and nail care before taking their state exam; the esthetician program requires 600 hours of instruction in skin care, including facials, body massage and spa treatments.

The Collective attracts students in the 19 to 25 age range, as well as adults who are seeking a career change, the owners said.

November's first cosmetology class has 11 students who will graduate in June, Kelly said. A second class started in late January, with a third class launching this spring.

The first class has attracted students from Napa, Solano, Sonoma and Contra Costa counties. Tuition for the





Nick Otto photos, Register

Client Marylee Sheffer hugs her stylist Kaye Jay after their appointment at the Napa Cosmetology Collective on Friday, Feb. 2.



Lexie Lockett practices washing the hair on a mannequin head at the Napa Cosmetology Collective.

cosmetology program is \$14,575, which covers all costs, Kelly said. “It’s a lot lower than other schools,” she added.

“We’re not doing this to be rich,” Kelly said. She and her business partner want the next generation of stylists to share an inclusivity and diversity ethos. “We want people to see beauty comes in all shapes and sizes,” she said.

Info: [napacosmocollective.com](http://napacosmocollective.com); 707-258-2627; 1701 Soscol Ave., Napa. ■



Jacky Medina practices manicure techniques on fellow student Gretchen Estrada at the Napa Cosmetology Collective.



**PHOTOS:** To go inside Napa Cosmetology Collective, point your smartphone camera at the QR code and tap the link. **NEWSVU**





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Otzlee Gray, 8, smiles as he climbs a wall at Rockzilla indoor rock climbing gym in Napa on Sunday, April 21.

Nick Otto, Register

# For the kids

Exploring family friendly spots in the Napa Valley

**KATIE DeBENEDETTI**

**W**hile Napa is known as a bucket-list destination for wine and food enthusiasts, it also appears to be a top-10 travel spot for families, according to Yelp. The crowd-sourcing review site named Napa the second most “kid-friendly” travel destination in the U.S. in March. The valley offers an array of activities — from

excursions up to Calistoga to see one of the country’s three faithful geysers, to a wine (and apple juice) tasting experience that the whole family will enjoy. Whether you’re a visitor or local, here are some places to get active, get outdoors, experience Napa Valley’s art scene, or just keep the family entertained all day.

**GET ACTIVE**  
**Rockzilla Climbing Gym**

Whether you can easily complete V7s or want to try bouldering for the first time, Rockzilla is your place. It’s Napa’s only indoor climbing gym and is family-owned and operated by Dwayne Robertson.

The facility has rope climbs, auto-belays, a bouldering wall, chimneys, and a textured wall. Their “pro shop” also has rental shoes and outdoor climbing equipment for purchase.





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Janelle Branson helps Tilly Mallett, 4, with her harness at Rockzilla indoor rock climbing gym in Napa on Sunday, April 21.



Children are seen climbing at Rockzilla indoor rock climbing gym in Napa during a birthday party on Sunday, April 21.



Isla Sakamoto, 8, holds a chicken while depositing a fresh egg into a carton at Connolly Ranch Education Center in Napa on Thursday.

Nick Otto photos,  
Register





Nick Otto photos, Register

**Clyde Stephens, 6, eats a peach he pulled from a tree in the educational garden at Connolly Ranch Education Center in Napa on Tuesday, July 7.**

Rockzilla offers memberships for avid climbers, and day passes for people who just want to see what the hype is about. Day passes with gear are \$26. The facility is open 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Saturday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Its address is 849 Jackson St. #5a in Napa.

### **Diamond 360**

Baseball players can also check out Diamond 360, an indoor batting cage and baseball training facility founded by college baseball teammates Michael Crandell and Dom Romero. Crandell was born and raised in Napa, and after playing college ball at Friends University, he and Romero moved back to Napa to offer specialized coaching and training for other future college athletes.

Diamond 360 hosts private lessons and small group practices daily, and will run a camp from July 9 to 11 this summer. It also offers open cage time for groups by request via phone.

"If you reach out to us via our website, email or give us a call, we definitely try to squeeze everybody in that we can," Crandell said.

Single 45-minute private lessons are \$75 and a three-pack is available for \$200. Group lesson pricing is available upon request. Diamond 360 is located at 1162 Jordan Ln. in Napa. For more information, visit [diamond360.com](http://diamond360.com).

### **EXPLORE THE OUTDOORS**

#### **American Canyon Wetlands**

The American Canyon Wetlands offer great walking trails, wildlife, and workout equipment. Walking or biking along the 10 miles of trails, you can see views of the Napa River and depending on the time of day, glimpses of some of the wildlife that wanders through the area. It's common to spot night herons, river otters and raptors, according to Joy Hilton, American Canyon Community & Parks Foundation's education director.

She said that sometimes, on a night walk around the wetlands, great horned owls emerge from the nests in the eucalyptus trees along the trails. If you choose to visit at night, Hilton recommends catching the sunset at Glass Beach on the outer edge of the wetlands, closest to the

river.

While the trails are open every day, the American Canyon Community & Parks Foundation offers quarterly Discovery Days at the wetlands, which include fun activities, educational programming, and nature-based movement. Starting in May, the foundation will also begin leading monthly family nature walks every third Sunday. The wetlands' address is 2 Eucalyptus Drive in American Canyon.

#### **Shenandoah Park**

If you can't make a scheduled event but are still looking for some guided exploration around American Canyon's outdoor spaces, Janelle Sellick said to visit Shenandoah Park and follow the "Story Walk" path.

"There's a book that's been deconstructed and broken up into 16 different pieces there," Sellick, the executive director of American Canyon Community & Parks Foundation, said. "People can walk about a one-third-mile loop around the park and read a story as they go."

Please see **KIDS**, Page 34



# WILD WEST

Up close and personal with African wildlife at Safari West Wildlife Preserve

**THERESA GONZALEZ**

From the top of our double-decker safari truck, my daughter Matilda and her friend Noelle squeal as they spot the “baby” rhino, Otto, weighing in at over 1,000 pounds. The Southern White rhino recently celebrated his first birthday, and as a male rhino, he will reach as much as 5,000 pounds like his father Ongave, who plays alongside him, gently knocking his horn.

Otto is one of the newest members of Sonoma County’s Safari West, a wildlife preserve and African tent camp in the foothills of the Mayacamas Mountains, just north of Santa Rosa and just an hour drive from Napa, along the Silverado Trail.

Our guide Brady pulls the jeep over to stop beside the rhino den and hops on the hood to share the story of the rhino’s near-threatened status, mostly due to poachers looking to profit off their horns. The rhino’s horns are perceived to have medicinal powers, Brady tells us, and serve as symbols of status and wealth in some cultures. Safari West has its own research team of veterinarians, biologists, and conservationists working on projects that include researching rhino reproduction using a combination of behavioral observation and thermal imaging.

Safari West was launched in the late 1980s to protect animals like Otto and raise awareness about wildlife issues. Founder Peter Lang grew up on Hollywood sets where his film and television director father Otto (rhino Otto’s namesake) raised exotic wildlife for films like “Daktari,” “Flipper” and “Sea Hunt.” In addition to its on-site research, the organization donates funds to global conservation projects, like the Cheetah Conservation Fund out of Namibia. Peter’s wife, Dr. Nancy Lang, a wildlife conservationist, helps lead the on-site research and manages the aviaries, including the



“Baby” rhino Otto with his mother at Safari West.

*Safari West photo*

## IF YOU GO

### **Safari West**

Address: 3115 Porter Creek Road Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Phone: (800) 616-2695 – (707) 579-2551

### **Flamingo Hotel**

Address: 2777 Fourth St. Santa Rosa, CA 95405

Phone: (800) 848-8300

massive walk-through aviary, the Amani Oasis, at the entrance of the ground, featuring birds from five different continents.

Brady hops back in the truck and drives off through the 400-acre oak woodland, where we spot zebras standing in pairs alongside the road like statues, ostriches who peer into our truck curiously poking a canvas bag on the front seat, and a herd of resting African cape buffalo. Few fences are in view as these “closures” give the animals ample space to roam. Brady puts our nerves at ease as he tells us that while the African cape buffalo — the third most dangerous animal behind the mosquito and the hippo — can be vindictive, hunting poachers for miles from the memory of their scent, they will only do so if you mess with them first.

I don’t hear a peep about boredom from the girls despite the tour being three hours long. We watch in awe at the giraffes circling our truck and sing “Stayin’ Alive” as the jeep bumps up, down and over steep, rolling hills. Brady passes around watusi cattle horns and black-tailed deer antlers, and hands us a real, not fertilized, ostrich

egg. (They only have females on site as the males will chase down the trucks.) The girls carefully handle it, surprised by its substantial weight.

Safari West is one of those rare gems where parents have as much fun as the kids. We chose a day off from school to spend among the herds and feathered friends, but guests can choose to spend the night in one of 30 glamping tents, each imported from Botswana. These luxury tents feature en-suite bathrooms, hardwood floors and private viewing decks. I make a mental note that one would make a great 10-year-old birthday present come November.

We exit near the cheetah preserve, where three cheetahs lounge in the sun behind tall grasses. Brady asks if we know how fast a cheetah can run. Matilda pops up her hand to answer 70 miles per hour, excited to share a fact from her vast wildlife knowledge.

We are hungry after the three-hour tour but the Savannah Cafe, which offers an authentic South African Braai, a close cousin to American barbecue, is closed. Reserve a spot at the outdoor restaurant or try an off-campus favorite like the Flamingo Lazeaway Club at the renovated mid-century Flamingo Hotel, a fun and affordable overnight for families with a heated pool if glamping isn’t your thing.

Private adults-only tours at Safari West include Winos and Rhinos, a wine tasting safari, Brews and Buffalo, a beer tasting, and Cheetahs and Chardonnay. Clearly, this is wine country, with an African view. ■



*Napa Valley*  
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Instructor Walt Williams, center, is seen organizing kids during Camp di Rosa in Napa on Tuesday.

Nick Otto photos, Register

## KIDS

From 31

The numbered plaques around the perimeter of the park guide visitors through a new story every quarter and include associated movement prompts for kids. The book begins at the plaque closest to Shanandoah's parking lot and bathrooms, marked with a number one. Shenandoah is at 100 Sonoma Creek Way in American Canyon.

### Playground Fantastico and Picnic Space

In Napa proper, there are also opportunities to adventure outdoors. The city of Napa's Playground Fantastico on Old Sonoma Road has an engaging, colorful play structure for kids, as well as a group picnic space. Families can pick up sandwiches from Genova Delicatessen, a local favorite, and spend an afternoon at the park.



Owen Stone, 11, shows Eamonn O'Brien, 7, the smallmouth bass he caught while fishing at Camp di Rosa in Napa on Tuesday.





*Nick Otto photos, Register*

**Kids swing on a tire swing as educators help other children at Connolly Ranch Education Center in Napa on Tuesday, July 7.**



**Sarita Dangol a camp educator, helps Emma Forner, 6, make a bracelet at Connolly Ranch Education Center in Napa on Tuesday, July 7.**

**Public parks and open spaces**

In addition to Playground Fantastico, the city of Napa has a

number of public parks for playing, skating, and hiking. All are listed on the city's parks department website.

The county is also home to three state parks — Bothe-Napa Valley State Park, the Bale Grist Mill State Historic Park and Robert Louis Stevenson State Park. The three sites have campgrounds, hiking trails, and according to Cathie Bennett Warner, the president of the Napa Valley State Parks Association, Bale Grist Mill Park has one of only two operational grist mills west of the Mississippi River. More information about each of the parks and its amenities is available at [napavalleystateparks.org](http://napavalleystateparks.org).

**Connolly Ranch Education Center**

Only about 10 minutes from downtown Napa, families can visit Connolly Ranch Education Center, a working 13-acre farm with edible and pollinator gardens and 25 farm animals.

Heidi Soldinger, the ranch's executive director, said the space offers a unique opportunity to see a part of Napa's natural landscape that's different from the valley's sprawling vineyards.

Please see **KIDS**, Page 38



# What do Napa's young adults do for fun?

**N**apa Valley is one of the most visited destinations in the world, garnering tens of thousands of visitors year-round. Even though I only find myself in Napa a few times a week these days, (usually for doctor's appointments), every single time I drive by the famous grape crusher statue and recall my childhood as an East Bay tourist, I think about how lucky I am to live so close to one of the most beautiful places in the United States.



**CHLOE MOODY**

I didn't truly realize its prolific nature until I moved here over three years ago. I don't take enough advantage of what Napa has to offer, but what does it really have for young people?

I used to work on First Street in a heavy tourist area, so I got to meet many of the tourists that stop into Downtown after a tasting Upvalley. I noticed that many visitors were celebrating their 10- or 20-year anniversaries, mostly older than myself or even my coworkers.

There were a few bachelorette parties or destination weddings sometimes with younger crowds, but living in a tourist destination, there exists a palpable divide between us and them — I routinely had customers tell me “If I lived here, I'd quit my job and work here.”

If you're under 21, where's the fun of it all?

With so many twenty-somethings constantly coming and going, I got to thinking: what is there to do for fun when you're young in Napa?

This reality hits even harder when you're sober, like myself and a growing number of people. While my sobriety is purely a condition of my chronic illness rather than something I count the days and months of with pride, I still bear its weight in each and every conversation about Napa nightlife.

Even day life, for that matter. Working downtown, I was shocked that everyone was itching to sneak off to Cadet Wine Bar after work, or better yet, Wine Girl at 12 p.m. on a Saturday. I had grown up with the motto “it's five o'clock somewhere,” but this was a mutually accepted all-day drinking culture.

Apart from the popular hobby of getting thoroughly inebriated by 3 p.m., what do young adults do for fun?

Personally, the best thing about being a local is taking visitors to your favorite spots, something my mother used to take pride in when showing our east coast relatives the hidden gems of the Bay Area.

When my sister visited, we started with our favorite old pastime: thrifting. We hit Napa Goodwill (I got some of my

favorite dresses here prior to the pandemic), the Community Projects Thrift Shop downtown, even the Napa Library when their quarterly book sale was happening. I also took her to Jax Diner, my favorite lunch spot downtown. Is there anything better than Bottlerock Tots and beignets for the table?

My fiancée and I have also been known to spend a day at some local favorites. We love visiting cafes and familiar favorites he grew up with, like Barnhouse, Gott's, and Hacienda of course.

As a disabled/neurodivergent couple, our Friday nights look very different from other adults our age. While our peers hit up Ace & Vine and other bars almost nightly, we get our sustenance from weekend coffee and hiking dates, usually in bed by 10 p.m.

Honestly, the fact that I can't name more than one bar in Napa should tell you how little I know about Napa nightlife — a clear distinction between myself and my able-bodied friends. Needless to say, I was never invited to any functions outside of work, most of which occurred at bars.

If you asked me what my perfect day in Napa would be, here it is:

I would start at Community Projects (make sure to get there close to when they open), then hit up my tried and true favorite, Napa Bookmine. If I were by myself, I would grab a pistachio latte and pastry from Le Paris, but if I were with someone, it would be Jax or Napa Noodle for sure.

Although, I do love my standing dates at Yak and Yeti with my local ostomy friend, and at Sushi Haku with my soon-to-be mother in law.

The Oxbow is also a favorite of the younger crowd, but not if you want to spend 20 minutes looking for parking. Although I love C Casa, the climate of the Oxbow is extremely overwhelming and overstimulating for a neurodivergent or disabled person, unfortunately.

There's no denying it, we truly are blessed to have world-class dining and entertainment here in Napa, but being a sober person with a disability makes it hard to partake in a lot of the culture that Napa prides itself on. Although I don't get to take advantage of it as much as I should, it's definitely a goal of mine to explore more of what Napa has to offer during this season of life. After all, many people would love to live here during the pivotal years of their twenties, so I guess that means I'm pretty much living the dream.

---

*Chloe Moody is a graduate student in San Francisco State University's English Literature department. She lives in American Canyon with her partner.*



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# KIDS

From 35

“Our mission is to instill people of all ages with a deep respect for the environment, an understanding of sustainable farming and a love for the natural world,” Soldinger said. “Through their time here at Connolly Ranch, people have very magical and memorable experiences. It allows them to have this moment to connect with the natural world.”

The education center has Sunday open houses twice a month, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Visitors are invited to take a self-guided tour of the farm and join in kids’ mindfulness and art classes, which run from noon to 1 p.m. on open house days.

Prices range from \$2 to \$10 per person. Details and dates are available at [connollyranch.org](http://connollyranch.org). The ranch’s address is 3141 Browns Valley Road, Napa.

## Calistoga’s Old Faithful Geysers

Upvalley, kids will love watching the Old Faithful Geysers (of California) erupt.



*Nick Otto photos, Register*

**Above: Visitors are seen on the grounds of the Old Faithful Geysers of California in Calistoga on Saturday, January 27.**

**Below: Rocks and smoothed bits of glass are seen on Glass Beach in the American Canyon wetlands hiking area.**







*Nick Otto, Register*

**A visitor is seen walking near Glass Beach in the American Canyon wetlands hiking area, a portion of southern Napa County that the California Geographical Survey lists as a tsunami hazard zone.**

One of only three geysers in the world given the “faithful” moniker, visitors are sure to see a show if they stick around for an hour or so, director Koray Sanli said. While the exact time between eruptions varies depending on weather and other factors, it is usually active anywhere between every 15 minutes to every hour and a half.

While waiting for the big moment, there are lots of other features to explore on-site. Access to a geology museum is included in the price of admission to see the geyser. The museum is the perfect place to study the science behind geysers and other natural phenomena like earthquakes and volcanoes. It also includes Northern California history exhibits.

There’s also a farm on the grounds where Nigerian Dwarf goats, alpacas and horses live. Visitors can visit the farm, and hang out at the geyser’s picnic and bocce area between eruptions.

Hours vary, but from May 1 to Sept. 30, the ground will be open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15 for adults, with discounts for seniors, children, and military. The address is 1299

Tubbs Lane in Calistoga.

#### **Carolyn Parr Nature Center**

To see more animal life, head to Carolyn Parr Nature Center, where Joyce Nichols, who is the president of the Napa Valley Naturalists, works as a docent. She said that kids and adults alike especially enjoy finding birds, insects and native plants on hikes along the center’s outdoor trails. They can even bring some of the crawling critters and plant life inside, to take a closer look under one of the nature center’s microscopes.

Inside, Nichols gives tours, guiding visitors through habitat displays with animal skins and skulls they can touch. The center also has a library area with nature books, floor puzzles, board games, and hand puppets.

“The most popular one is a giant mosquito,” Nichols said.

The center is open at 3107 Browns Valley Rd in Napa on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free for members and \$5 for non-members.

#### **EXPERIENCE THE ARTS**

##### **GUILD Napa**

Kids who love to cook, craft, paint, or sew will love spending the afternoon at GUILD Napa. The maker workshop offers drop-in afternoons every Thursday from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Each week, the center leads visitors in a different crafting project. Carrie Saxl, the co-founder of GUILD, said that over the past few months, these have included molding clay pots, dying fabric, and stamping tea towels.

“With a lot of our kids’ crafts we try to go beyond just like glue and construction paper and give them something they can make that they’re going to take home and continue to want to display or use,” Saxl said.

GUILD also offers a few weekly classes for kids ages five to 12. On Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, it has STEAM-based classes that combine elements of science, gardening, culinary arts and music with an art-based project.

On Tuesdays and Fridays, GUILD hosts “Stitches and Strings,” an after-school sewing club. Students learn to hand sew, operate a sewing machine and even print



The classic game  
Operation is seen at  
the Napa Toy Museum in  
Napa on Friday, Feb. 9.

Nick Otto, Register



and dye fabrics.

It also offers cooking classes on Mondays. In each session, kids learn technical kitchen skills like safely handling knives, reading recipes and measuring ingredients. They also learn delicious recipes with ingredients pickier eaters might turn their noses up at at home.

“One of the recipes that we did was Korean pancakes, which are often served with kimchi,” Saxl said. “Most of the kids in the class had not tried kimchi before and a lot of them were unsure about it. In the end, I think all but maybe one of the kids really loved it.”

GUILD also hosts weeklong summer camps that feature a mix of arts, cooking, and STEAM projects. While camps are designed for kids to attend weekly, Saxl said that visitors can also call the studio and drop into a camp if there’s room. The first camp begins June 10 and sessions run for 10 weeks. The hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

GUILD is located at 575 Coombsville Road in Napa. For more information about pricing from drop-in days, camps and classes, visit [guildnapa.com](http://guildnapa.com).

### Di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art

The di Rosa Center is a great place to get out of the heat and explore a collection of contemporary art. The center currently has two exhibitions that will be viewable through the end of summer, called “Ghost in the Machine” and “To the Max!” It

also has a continuing gallery called “The Incorrect Museum” which explores the history of Northern California through the “rule-breaking, iconoclastic spirit of art and artists in the region,” according to the center’s website.

According to Hugo Corro, the associate director of education and civic engagement at di Rosa, all of the art is accessible for kids, but “To the Max!” is especially fun.

“It’s very colorful, you’ll see a lot of texture, a lot of really big elements, as well as some smaller detail. I think just as a visual thing it’s really engaging for kids,” Corro said.

He also said that di Rosa’s outdoor sculpture garden is great for children of all ages to explore.

“There’s a variety of art and nature that I think makes di Rosa unique,” Corro said. “Our site has galleries with artwork as well as outdoor sculptures, but also, this aspect where you can explore around the lake, picnic, go out to the olive grove into the meadow.”

The di Rosa Center will also hold summer day camps in July, though most sessions are full for ages 6-11. There is some availability for kids ages 12-14 at [dirosaart.org/summer-camp](http://dirosaart.org/summer-camp).

The center is open for drop-in hours Thursdays through Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$20 for the general public, with discounts available for seniors, children, military personnel and

educators. It is located at 5200 Sonoma Highway in Napa.

### Napa Toy Museum

For a museum geared directly toward kids, check out the Napa Toy Museum, which boasts a collection of over 500 vintage toys, popular from the 1890s to the 1960s. The museum features a vintage carousel seat, a Popeye boxing toy, and many other classics parents will recognize and children will love.

The museum is open Wednesday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission runs from \$4 to \$8 and kids under age 8 can enter for free. It is located downtown at 964 Pearl St. in Napa.

### WINE

#### Castello di Amorosa

Of course, no trip to Napa would be complete without a wine tasting, so with kids in tow, head to Castello di Amorosa for a tasting experience perfect for the whole family. The winery is in a beautiful 14th-century style Tuscan castle and visitors can wander into its courtyard, tower, chapel and great hall. It also has a special tasting for kids, which includes non-alcoholic Muscat Canelli grape juice. While children of all ages are welcome, no strollers are allowed on the grounds.

Castello di Amorosa is located at 4045 St. Helena Highway in Calistoga. It is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Reservations are required. Tastings are priced at \$60 for adults and \$25 for children. ■





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# Eye on Napa Valley

Moments captured by Register photographer Nick Otto



▲ A Fan is seen with a baseball glove on their head as they walk around the Giants & KNBR FanFest Tour which was held at Napa Yard, Oxbow Gardens in Napa on Saturday, Feb. 3.



▲ San Francisco Giants legend Matt Williams signs a poster for Jayden Willey, 7, who traveled from Fresno with his Dad to attend the Giants & KNBR FanFest Tour which was held at Napa Yard, Oxbow Gardens in Napa on Saturday, Feb. 3.





▲ Fans line up outside of Napa Yard, Oxbow Gardens waiting to enter The San Francisco Giants & KNBR FanFest Tour on Saturday, Feb. 3.



◀ Local San Francisco 49er fan Rosanna Hotchkiss, seen on Wednesday wearing a Fred Warner jersey in her Napa living room, will watch Super Bowl LVIII with about two dozen friends at Trancas Steakhouse as the 49ers face the Kansas City Chiefs in Las Vegas.



▲ A San Francisco 49ers fan in a Brock Purdy jersey dances while attending a Super Bowl LVIII watch party at The Garden in Napa on Sunday, Feb. 11.



◀ San Francisco 49ers fans cheered while watching Super Bowl LVIII at The Garden in Napa on Sunday, Feb. 11. The 49ers led for much of the game, only to fall in overtime to the Kansas City Chiefs.



## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

# Keeping things rolling

Wine Train general manager has spent decades in the hospitality industry

JENNIFER HUFFMAN

Nathan Davis' first hospitality job included a nightly magic show. He wasn't the magician, but he was in charge of practically everything else at a 16-room San Francisco hotel. And he was just 18.

From there, Davis took on bigger hotels and bigger roles in cities such as New York City, Dana Point, Bodega Bay, San Diego and Maui.

"I thrive while being and thinking on my feet and facing constant challenges and different people all the time," said Davis.

Today he works as the general manager of the Napa Valley Wine Train. However, his long-term aspiration is "to be a great dad, a passionate and caring hospitality veteran, a staunch advocate, steward, and trailblazer for our wonderful Napa Valley, and the best husband I can be," said Davis.

### 1. What's the worst job you ever had?

Perhaps the "worst" job I have ever had the pleasure to enjoy was working a day job for a short while at a finance leasing company doing outbound sales calls.

### 2. What job would you like to try/not try?

Try: My degree in International Relations from CSU Chico launched me into trying out for the State Department as a diplomat. I got an invite to return, which I never followed through on as I had already launched into my hospitality career in earnest.

Not try: Going back to a finance leasing company.

### 3. How did you get into the hospitality industry?

I jumped into my first job while attending Chico High School at 16 at Taco Bell. One of many pivotal leaps, prompted largely by the death of my mom immediately following high school graduation, was a move to San Francisco at 18 in the fall of 1993.

Working at the (then) Mansions Hotel and Restaurant for room and board in a basement room was a great way to get my feet under me to learn about myself, San Francisco and the world of hospitality in

an intimate 16-room environment with a nightly dinner and magic show.

At the Mansions, I learned to wear many hats quickly (as) the sole morning breakfast cook, server, dishwasher, then housekeeper tearing through the guest room check-outs and stay-overs.

After a brief respite to explore the city in the afternoons, I would return as prep-cook, followed by server for the dinner service then shift back into the whites to wash the dishes.

To finish the night, all other staff would leave for the day and all phones would be transferred to my bedside phone.

I continued through the restaurant scene in San Francisco with 5 years with Kimpton at two hotel restaurants, spent one year in New York City, then started back to school at CSU Chico at 25 working my way through college at a fine dining restaurant.

Upon graduating, I opened and operated all food and beverage operations at Chico's Hotel Diamond and then fully committed to this career in hospitality at 30 moving to Dana Point to help lead the Michael Mina restaurant, Stonehill Tavern, at the St. Regis Monarch Beach Resort and Spa.

Having joined Starwood Hotels and Resorts in Dana Point, I capitalized on the learning and growth opportunities they made available and quickly moved up and around in the organization from the Sheraton Grand Sacramento, to the Westin Maui Resort and Spa as food and beverage director, then being promoted to director of operations for the U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego, and finally achieving on a long-term goal of moving my expanding family to Napa to partner with the Silverado Resort and Spa team.

With my wife being a Napa native, this move brought us close to her family and the wonderful support this offers. Woodside Hotels and Resorts lured me into my first general manager opportunity at the Bodega Bay Lodge, with a quick pivot to Harvest Inn, St. Helena for approximately four years, and since July 2021 as a member of the Napa Valley Wine Train team and finally having become firmly rooted at home in Napa.

### 4. What is the biggest challenge the

### hospitality industry has faced?

People and culture in the workplace. The most important thing we do as leaders in hospitality is invest in our people, provide them the tools and empowerment to provide exceptional service for our guests. This starts with having the right people, and in the needed quantity, and on the right seats to complete on our assignments, and that has long been the big problem our industry has faced.

### 5. What's one thing Napa could do to help local business?

Napa must continue to band together as neighbors in aligning our overall sales mission of promoting this destination first through the lens of a local. If it is a great place to live, then it will be a great place to visit.

### 6. If you could change one thing about the hospitality industry, what would it be?

It is a blessing and a curse this hospitality industry inspires such passion in those who fall in love with it. The passion inspires a desire to leave it better at the end of each day, which is very demanding given the days in hospitality can already be long.

Then when you have already worked a full day, you are charged to put in that extra time at the end of the day to attend to the things you could not prioritize earlier in the day. Before you know it, you compromise on your priorities to your wife, kids, friends and hobbies.

### 7. What's your favorite gift to give?

Wine that tells a story. To me, there is nothing more personal than understanding a person for who they are and gifting them with a wine that you know will speak to their soul.

### 8. What's your favorite charity or nonprofit?

Having been a foster family in Napa, we love and adore the unconditional work that Peggy and Tom do with Expressions of Hope. On a larger scale, the benefits and life skills invested into our youth by the Boys and Girls Club of Napa is inspiring. Their multi-faceted approach with engagement in their core programming will bring a young person in and help take them as far as their dreams will allow. ■



Nathan Davis, Napa Valley Wine Train





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# New, improved and cleaner

Wine Train's \$2.4 million 'green' locomotive travels Napa Valley

JENNIFER HUFFMAN

What was a Napa Valley Wine Train locomotive doing on railroad tracks in Tennessee, Arkansas, Texas and Arizona this past October?

Just passing through was the answer.

Sharp-eyed train aficionados in those states spied something unusual on local rails that month: a shiny new Wine Train locomotive.

Rolling along amid a string of otherwise unremarkable rail cars, the wine country locomotive was headed on a 6,000-mile, two-month journey to downtown Napa.

Arriving in the Napa Valley, the locomotive became the Wine Train's newest — and most expensive — addition to its fleet.

It's also the Wine Train's first "green" engine.

Using "cutting-edge" technology, the locomotive consumes less diesel fuel and cuts emissions by 90%, according to a news release from the Wine Train. The new locomotive is also quieter, smoother and more powerful than its older Wine Train peers.

Notably, the locomotive meets or exceeds the highest emission-control classifications of the Environmental Protection Agency and the California Air Resources Board.

"It feels great" to finally start using the new locomotive, said Nathan Davis, the Wine Train's general manager.

The Wine Train has been owned by Noble House Hotels & Resorts Ltd. since 2015. Noble House originally hoped to get a new locomotive sooner but the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily interrupted those plans, according to Davis.

"It's been a long journey to get this thing here," he said.

Named 1864 in honor of the Napa rail line's founding year, the locomotive cost \$2.4 million, said a representative from the Wine Train. It was made by Knoxville Locomotive Works in Tennessee, which explains why the train had to take a cross-country trip to get to California.

The 1864 locomotive does look different than the other Wine Train engines, said



Napa Valley Wine Train photo

Have you noticed the new Napa Wine Train "green" locomotive rolling along Valley railroad tracks? It cost \$2.4 million, uses much less fuel and cuts emissions by 90%.

Davis. "We love how it looks different" than those classic locomotives, said the GM.

The front "nose" is boxier and more rectangular, instead of rounded as on a vintage train. The engine "cab" features more windows for better visibility.

"I think it's really cool. It's boxy, it's tough," and at the same time shows off the Wine Train's familiar burgundy-gold-green colorway, said Davis.

Weighing in at 275,000 pounds, the train produces 1,560 horsepower. Another noticeable difference is that the amount of smoke produced by the new engine is drastically reduced. Gone are the belches of thick black smoke as seen from other trains.

The addition of this new engine means that the Wine Train now has eight locomotives available to use.

Davis explained that the Wine Train normally uses two locomotives to pull its trains.

"The beauty of this is that we're able to now run one locomotive" instead of two, because the 1864 engine is that much more powerful.

## NEXT LOCOMOTIVES COULD COST \$2.9 MILLION

This new "green" engine is the first but it won't be the last. The goal is to buy three more near-zero-emission locomotives to fill out the fleet, according to an email statement from the Wine Train.

Ultimately, the older Wine Train engines, some dating back to 1942, will be

phased out. Ideally, the rail line will add three more such engines by the end of 2025.

One thing is already for certain — the price is going up to about \$2.9 million, "so we have to save up," said Davis of the Wine Train.

Partial funding for the purchase of the 1864 locomotive was made possible by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Carl Moyer Memorial Air Quality Standards Attainment Program providing grant funding for cleaner-than-required engines, equipment and other sources of air pollution, according to the Wine Train's statement.

Sustainability is a core mission of the Noble House organization and also important to its customers, "so this is kind of putting our money where our mouth is," Davis said.

The new locomotive could travel as fast as 90 mph, said Wine Train engineer Artemus Rogerson, but usually is kept to an easy 17 mph.

Rogerson said he grew up in Napa Valley and joined the Wine Train more than two years ago. Before that, he'd never worked on a train before. Today he's trained in three key roles; conductor, engineer and dispatcher.

"It's the coolest job," Rogerson said. "I get to drive the train up and down Napa Valley" through its scenery. "I plan to work here until I retire."

Davis said that the Wine Train employs 130 people. ■



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