

## LITA of Contra Costa Love Is The Answer

PO Box 121 Port Costa, CA 94569-0121

### LITA of CC FALL WINTER NEWS 2022



Yvonne Gibbs at work



Succulents & fun rocks



Katie Alva Top Volunteer

October 16, 2022 LITA of Contra Costa held its first in-person volunteer group activity since 2020 at Legacy Nursing and Rehab in Martinez, with **Teen and Parent Service Society** volunteers Karina Kaneko, Katie Alva and parent Jenny Lin who delivered hand made Halloween cards, crane mobiles, painted rocks and big smiles.

Since 2002 **TAPS** has worked to fill unmet needs for teen service opportunities in Walnut Creek and Diablo Valley areas. Melanie Knoth English, with Christy Deibert, Rhonda Montgomery and Cindy Sakai, founded TAPS, which now has over 200 teens and parents dedicated to helping those in need. TAPS does not fundraise and has a sole focus on hands-on community service. Jenny Lin, VP of Services at TAPS this year for the first time has been a LITA holiday volunteer, both caroling and card making with daughter Katie Alva since 2012.

LITA's Volunteer of the Year, Katie Alva spent many hours ahead of this visit crafting paper crane mobiles that she and Karina hung up in resident's rooms with Activity Director Vanessa. They and the other Taps volunteers made hundreds of holiday cards plus painted rocks for garden and even inside a LITA donated hamper cage.



AD Vanessa & LITA Dir.



Katie & Karina working with AD Vanessa



Jenny, Yvonne & Victoria



Yvonne and Karina

Covid 19 Spring 2020 pandemic quarantines called for LITA to transition from inside facility volunteer visits to donating personal tablets and doing a weekly LITA Music Zoom. In 2021 with a grant from, the Bay Area News Group Foundation, Share the Spirit LITA began to build open air gardens for patients use, inside a facility's enclosed courtyard. This program was able to continue and make plans for spring 2023 expansion thanks to multiple donor support. Skilled nursing facilities are still subject to quarantines, be in Covid or the flu, especially in wintertime. So LITA and TAPS felt very fortunate to be able to safely accomplish the October volunteer visit. LITA and TAPS volunteers accepted a Legacy Nursing and Rehab invitation to come a'caroling at 10:30 on Saturday, December 24<sup>th</sup> and at 2pm, holiday spirit ablaze we arrive to sing for Windsor Rosewood.



LITA OF CONTRA COSTA LOVE IS THE ANSWER

A Non-Profit Public Charity since 1980 serving the elderly & disabled in care facilities

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Share The Spirit grants require personal interviews with beneficiaries of non-profit's programs so STS motivated LITA to gather the patient stories on this page, hoping STS will return to donate to LITA in 2023. The interviews featured are from patients ready (for some time) to share their stories in the CCC Times.

Activity Director Isaac Silva and resident Erich Lichthardt are "team cheerful" at **Bayberry Health Care** in Concord. Born & raised, through high school in Alaska, Erich was living in San Rafael prior to that day in 2019 when he survived a massive stroke and soon after was admitted to Bayberry HC. When we sat down to talk, AD Isaac described Erich existing in an unresponsive "fugue" state for a long time. Then, Erich spoke of the very moment he came back to himself: "I dropped a box of movie popcorn Isaac tried to hand me. Popcorn scattered everywhere. Right then the fog cleared and I returned to myself. Isaac was there ready with another box and a cheerful word." Since then, Erich remains Isaac's #1 "go to", upbeat person at Bayberry. Loving movies so much, Erich had even worked at a theater. The gifted LITA tablet was pure gold for watching movies, Youtube music, DepechMode & 80s rock, plus enables Erich to be a regular attendee at his remote bible study group. LITA asked after AD assistant Margarita (pictured below receiving a few of the 40 some tablets LITA has provided Bayberry patients. Isaac and Erich strongly expressed how much they both miss Margarita!



AD Isaac Silva in 2020



Isaac & Erich Lichthardt Oct.2022



Margarita Ronquillo retired & much missed

One of LITA's patio gardeners, Kenneth Lee Elton Charles Jacob, goes by Jake at **Pittsburg Skilled Nursing**. We've weeded, pruned and planted together on several afternoons. Enlisting in the Marines just in time to do a tour in Vietnam, Jake returned to Pittsburg in 1975 and found work in trucking and at the local steel mill, until the landlord at his apartment complex talked him into learning plant care and landscaping. He enjoyed it & did that work for some years for the cities of Antioch and Pittsburg. Jake often talks with his parents Dorothy and Calvin Jacobs of Pittsburg, but hasn't seen his only sibling since the 2017 cancer surgery caused Jake's double amputation and move to PSN. Age 67, Jake is a Warriors, Giants, 49ers James Brown, dominos & coloring fan. He spins in his wheelchair to any good R&B, soul or funky live music. Jake is our real live PSN Garden Angel.



Jake working solo



Garden group at Pittsburg Skilled Nursing



Go Warriors !



Legacy residents at new hamster cage

**Legacy Nursing and Rehab** resident Yvonne Gibbs 87 (above right & front page) just may introduce herself to you by stating, "I had 5 children by age 23"! Later on, she developed into a master home gardener, giving free classes on best practices like composting and organic pest control, cultivating figs, citrus and pears along with flowers and herbs on her 1/2 acre plot in Houston, prior to moving into Legacy Nursing and Rehab in 2021. This was just after LITA and former Activity Director Sharon Lobato first set up the large covered patio garden there. I've seen Yvonne's instincts and skills at work, planting seeds, thinning starts and weeding. Yvonne is fortunate to have a daughter who visits her often at Legacy. One of Yvonne's best garden "students" is current Activity Director Vanessa. She enjoys Yvonne, so the two of them work well together. LITA learned that Yvonne and other resident were asking for a pet hamster which LITA donated along with a sturdy cage, after a former fired administrator took their only pet in residence (a small bird). Congratulations Vanessa, AD of the Year!

[Website www.litaofcontracosta.org](http://www.litaofcontracosta.org)

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## LITA of Contra Costa Volunteer Appreciation Awards for 2022



**Katie Alva** wins [The Kathleen Berner Award](#) for **Best All Around Volunteer**

Katie has grown up (at least since age 5) volunteering each December with LITA of Contra Costa. She and her Girl Scout Troop 33080 also made mountains of holiday cards at the Port Costa School for several years running. Now Katie is in High School and is an active **TAPS** volunteer. She worked with LITA this summer to set up a patio garden at Tampico Terrace then helped keep it watered during a few very hot spells. Last Christmas when it wasn't safe nor even allowed to enter skilled nursing facilities, TAPS made a lively dancing and caroling video for LITA's Christmas eve Zoom show. Katie is artistic, versatile and productive, creating fun holiday cards, paper crane mobiles and amusing, brightly painted rocks, projects that expanded to include TAPS volunteers.



**Frank Jurik** wins [The Iris Suhl Founder's Award](#): for **Loyal & Generous Donors** Frank was

born two houses down from LITA's corporate office (at my home) in Port Costa, where his mom Theresa still lives! Frank moved on to get a degree, have a successful career and then retired to enjoy fishing, cycling and gardening. We recently reconnected (where else but on facebook) and Frank soon became a regular LITA donor. This year he nominated LITA to his **Johnson & Johnson Western Region Retirees Association** who made a substantial donation to LITA of Contra Costa when several of our other major donors were unable to help at all. Thanks you Frank for great timing and shining a light on LITA, making the connection for us with JJWRA



**Jenny Lin** wins [The Patsy Berndt Award](#):for **Special Events & Holiday Volunteers** Jenny is

our idea of a present day superwoman, successful business owner of Lin tax Law, a fully engaged mom and now a new leader with TAPS **Teen And Parents Service Society** supporting LITA's in person volunteer events. Jenny and daughter Katie Alva, first joined LITA in 2012 for group caroling. They have animated a 2022 caroling tour revival with LITA and TAPS volunteers on December 24<sup>th</sup> for Legacy Nursing and Rehab and Windsor Rosewood Manor Care, both long time LITA served skilled nursing facilities in Martinez and Pleasant Hill.

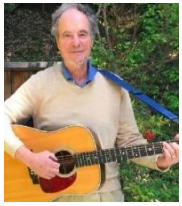


**Vanessa Castaneda** wins [The Mae Wygant Award](#): for **Best Activity Director**

I first met Vanessa while bringing LITA's gift tablets for residents use at Windsor Rosewood Care Center in Pleasant Hill. She was patient and good at getting the residents set up so they could use the devices. Later, as Activity Director at Hillcrest in Antioch she continued to facilitate LITA gifting and caroling programs. Finally settling (we hope) at **Legacy Nursing and Rehab**, Vanessa took over managing the new patio garden with enthusiasm from former long time and hands-on AD, Sharon Lobato (Sharon is now AD at Vale in San Pablo). Their covered patio garden and all our programs are flourishing at Legacy, thanks to Vanessa and her team.



## 2022 Music Volunteer regulars who appeared on LITA's Friday Zoom for participating east bay nursing facilities



*John Gruenstein*



*Suellen Primost*



*Randy Burge Hali Hammer*



*Celestine Tiller*



*Victoria Ryan*



*Dr Alan Brast*



*Sheela Gunn-Cushman*



*Rory Snyder*



*Sadie Isadora Peake*

Spring 2020 after the SNF lock downs, LITA introduced free weekly one hour variety music shows on Zoom. (top left to right): Multi-talented John Gruenstein, was a LITA music visitor in 2012 at Lafayette Care Center, prior to pioneering his program at John Muir Medical Center, doing room to room musical visits. He is LITA's zoom producer. emcee and a performer along with LITA director Victoria Ryan. Talented local artists and guests from across the US have appeared weekly ever since. Above are 2022's most frequent performers: Cellist, Suellen Primost is a graduate of Peabody, living in Loch Lomond. She is a universal artist for peace and the planet and a member of Victoria's 1972 touring band; Hali and Randy are local (probably national) folk legends who we adore along with thousands of their other fans. Hali invited Bart busker Sheela, to join us on zoom, share her strong voice and keep her poppin' show chops up during Covid. (top right) Victoria Ryan often sings De Colores, always in a blooming Beach Blanket Babylon hat that some in LITA's audience eagerly anticipate. Dr. Alan Brast (2<sup>nd</sup> row left) sings his fine selection of tunes and plays excellent guitar, in between seeing his patients at John Muir Medical Center. Celestine Tiller often joins Victoria Ryan for duets, but is best known for her solo standards and great "old time religion" rendition of Amazing Grace. Rory Snyder, Professor Emeritus, Diablo Valley College, 21year director of Jazz studies, has some serious saxes and flutes with the chops to match. We enjoy his guest trumpet player Mark Mazor. Sadie Isadora Peake of Sacramento also earns a LITA multi-talent star for her Egyptian drumming, flute playing and belly dancing not to mention her hair & make up!

**Ken Berner gave in Memory of past LITA president Kathy Berner and our dearest late holiday angels, Patsy and Ken Berndt and to Honor his fellow Lion, Neil Desmond of Crockett Lions Club**

**Remembering John O'Leary, Boston area talent who the world lost suddenly to cancer on September 21. He introduced gifted goddaughter Abigail Arndt, singer, pianist and interpreter of John's originals on LITA's Zooms. You can see LITA Mood Musician Youtube and hear this gentle music-man at: [Oleary 20221112](#)**

**LITA could do very little without these Valued and Appreciated Donors:**

**Individual donors:** Ken Berner, Cris Boddum, John Cagnone, Mike & Bunny Daly, Linda Daniel, Sean Douglas, Betty Eyges, Joan Finton, Sara Garetz, Mike & Nanci Gautier, Ridge & Monica Greene, John Gruenstein, Frank Jurik, Ellen Kelly, Margaret Kelly, Olga Knight, Stacy Lawn, Anne & John Mann, Gloria Matinucci, Sarah Peterson, Nadine Peyrucain, Lawrence Quirico, Sally Riggs, Steven Roberti, Ellen Rosen, Barbara Schneider, Mona Silveira, Rory Snyder, Michael Tobin and Victoria Ryan

**Foundation Donors:** Share the Spirit, Network For Good Fundraisers, East Bay Community Foundation Beswick Family Trust and Johnston & Johnston via Johnston and Johnston Western Retirees Association.

**Clubs that donate:** Cerrito City Club, the Bayview Eagles and Crockett Lion's Club.

**Corporate donors:** Lin Tax Law, Mechanics Bank, Phillips 66 and matched retiree's donations from Chevron.