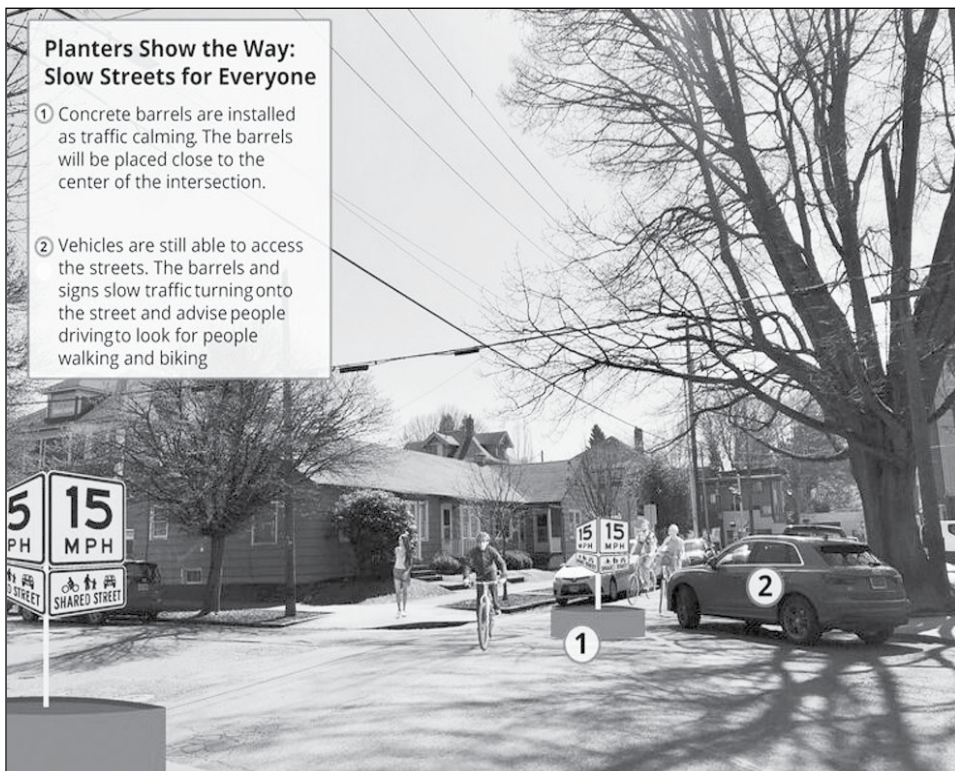


# AlamedaPDX

Summer 2022

Volume 36 Number 2



PBOT RENDERING OF THE TYPE OF TRAFFIC CALMING BARRELS PLANNED FOR NE ALAMEDA AND FREMONT.



VIEW OF INTERSECTION AT NE ALAMEDA AND FREMONT, WHICH HAS DRAWN CONCERN FOR LOW VISIBILITY.

## PBOT Plans Traffic Calming on NE Fremont by Mariah Dula

In March, Alameda and Beaumont-Wilshire neighbors learned of a plan by Portland’s Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) to install concrete traffic calming devices and reroute traffic at the intersection of NE Fremont and NE Alameda Streets. Initially the response seemed like a win for Beaumont-Wilshire neighbors, who brought the intersection to the attention of PBOT due to concerns about crashes and near misses at the location.

### Poor visibility

It’s an intersection traversed by many area residents, including those with children at Beaumont and Alameda public schools. While the intersection is marked with crossing strips and signage - including new “shared streets” signage advising vehicles to reduce their speed to 15 miles per hour and discouraging through traffic - the challenge for those crossing or turning onto Fremont is visibility.

The proposed traffic calming, which would include cement barrels and signage, would prevent vehicle traffic on Fremont from turning onto Alameda, turning left from Alameda or crossing Fremont. Bike and pedestrian traffic would not be restricted.

Area residents who frequent the intersection have wondered why if crashes or near misses are the concern for bike, pedestrian and vehicular traffic crossing Fremont, the City didn’t choose to improve visibility. An obvious solution to some would be removing parking along Fremont immediately before and after the intersection and/or relocating the bus stop at the southwest corner of Fremont.

According to PBOT, NE Fremont is one of 30 “high crash” network streets in the city. Fremont ranks as such for driving and biking crashes, though not pedestrian ones, which may be of the greatest concern at the Alameda-Fremont intersection. The intersection is currently part of a greenway that runs approximately a mile and a half along Alameda from NE 36th to NE 67th Avenues. It is heavily used for a residential street, with about 1,000 crossings per day.

### Temporary measures tend to become permanent

At the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, with the widespread closures of many community and recreation sites including gyms and playgrounds, PBOT temporarily converted 100 miles of already low-traffic streets into “local access only” to restrict cut-through traffic.

The project was presented as a way to give cooped-up Portlanders better access to residential streets for biking, walking and socializing. In part using one-time, pandemic relief funding, the bureau quickly turned select residential streets into “Slow Streets” intended for bike and pedestrian traffic and local use by automobiles. As an existing greenway, NE Alameda soon had traffic barrels declaring the street “local access only.”

Although billed as temporary, the program hasn’t proven to be. According to PBOT, the experiment was declared a success based on “the positive response to the program,” reflecting a large share of about 2,000 comments it received via email. In 2021, the bureau began constructing permanent installations at some Slow Street locations with 15 mile-per-hour advisory signs, continuing to keep traffic low and speeds slow on those streets even as the City transitioned from pandemic response to recovery.

At a March 2022 advisory meeting of the Beaumont-Wilshire Neighborhood Association and PBOT, over 70 Beaumont-Wilshire residents weighed in on the plan for the intersection. While a majority objected to the plan, their vote was advisory-only and PBOT is moving forward with a pilot. Whether it becomes permanent (as seems to be the trend) remains to be seen. While PBOT had promised that the Alameda Neighborhood Association would be included in conversations and mailings, two months later the ANA has yet to receive any outreach.

PBOT is set to begin installing the calming devices this Summer, and will collect data on the project during the Winter. In Spring 2023, the bureau will provide a formal evaluation and recommendation.

Without improved visibility, neighbors worry that the traffic diversion will simply send a higher volume of cars onto other neighborhood streets, while leaving the problem of safe crossing for pedestrians and bikes untouched.

*Comments and questions about this project can be directed to Scott Cohen, PBOT Program Coordinator at 503-823-5345 and [scott.cohen@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:scott.cohen@portlandoregon.gov).*

*If you would be interested in attending an Alameda Neighborhood Association meeting to discuss the PBOT proposal, please email the ANA at [alamedapdx@gmail.com](mailto:alamedapdx@gmail.com).*

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## Editor's Message

by Annette Bendinelli



We have a lot of great stories in this issue, so I'm going to keep my message short and let you hear from the writers instead! However, I do want to share a couple of exciting things the Alameda Neighborhood Association has been working on, now

that we're back to regular, in-person meetings.

The big news is that we're putting together an Alameda

neighborhood email list. Want to receive notifications for ANA events and opportunities, or post an event of your own? Have a question or concern, or just want to connect with your neighbors? Get on the list! To be included, send your name and email address to [alamedapdx@gmail.com](mailto:alamedapdx@gmail.com).

We're also planning some great ANA neighborhood events in the coming months, including service activities like trash pickup and recycling, family-friendly social gatherings, and informational meetings on a variety of topics. If there's a subject you'd like to discuss or an issue you'd like to learn more about, send an email to

[alamedapdx@gmail.com](mailto:alamedapdx@gmail.com). and the Board will consider it for an upcoming meeting.

And remember that all Alameda residents are welcome to attend regular monthly neighborhood association meetings, which are currently scheduled for the second Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at Fremont United Methodist Church. We want to hear from you!

And now I'll step out of the way and let our writers have the floor. Happy Summer, everyone!

— Annette

## NECC Celebrates Community, Launches Fundraiser

by Claire Rischiotto

Last month more than 150 of Northeast Community Center's neighbors took part in a week-long photo and video event in the NECC lobby. This fun celebration marked the first time in two years that participants and staff were able to see each other's faces and beautiful smiles!

We are thrilled with the outcome of this event and the ability to both celebrate and show off our fantastic community. The resulting lobby art installation will help us launch into the Spring Appeal for The Community Fund (TCF)—a resource to provide financial assistance and ensure everyone has access to wellness programs and activities, regardless of financial circumstance. We are excited to honor our community in this special way, since we know NECC programs do not yet include all of our neighbors.

One goal of NECC's new Strategic Plan is to champion and embed equity in every aspect of our organization. To

help achieve this ambitious goal, we expanded our existing financial assistance program to improve access to wellness and recreational activities for BIPOC participants, and to low-income communities who have been disproportionately impacted by racial and social injustice, COVID-19 and other inequities.

Since July of 2021, we have raised \$16,900 for TCF from generous donors. In that same time, we have given out \$37,000 in subsidy awards. Our goal is to fundraise at least 80% of our TCF award amount every year.

To learn more about our Spring Appeal for The Community Fund, visit <https://necommunitycenter.org/community-fund/>

Claire Rischiotto is a Communications Assistant at NECC.



MEMBERS SHARE THEIR SMILES IN AN NECC LOBBY ART INSTALLATION.

## Northeast Village PDX Unveils New Video

by Jon Dickman

For the past five years, Northeast Village PDX has served Alameda and other neighborhoods in central northeast Portland. The volunteer-based, member-led and self-governing group has empowered older people to remain in their homes and enjoy a purposeful quality of life.

The group's services include transportation, light home maintenance, tech support, social visits, phone check-ins, yardwork, and neighborhood walks. Membership fees help pay for Village operating costs.

Since the Village's beginnings, members Jane Braunger and Julie Granger have provided in-person informational sessions about the group and, in response to the pandemic, introductory sessions through videoconference. Now, as of this past spring, Braunger and Granger have assembled what they see as a more convenient way for people to get information: a comprehensive, nine-minute video called "Introduction to Northeast Village PDX," which they have posted on YouTube

at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1-NlaOPp-A>.

The video describes how to become a member and/or volunteer, and how to access the Village's services and activities. It provides historical and other factual information about Northeast Village PDX, which is located at 5830 NE Alameda St. The video is also helpful for people wanting to share information about the Village with loved ones or friends who may benefit from the group's services and activities.

Braunger and Granger will host an "Introduction to Northeast Village PDX" informative session at the Community for Positive Aging, 1820 NE 40th Ave., on Tuesday, June 14, from 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. for prospective members and volunteers. Call 503-895-2750 for more information.



NE VILLAGE VOLUNTEERS CHECK IN WITH OLDER NEIGHBORS.

## ALAMEDA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION STATEMENT OF INCLUSION AND SUPPORT

Our community declared the Alameda neighborhood a hate-free zone in 1995. Today, we reaffirm Alameda's commitment to be a loving, caring, supportive and inclusive community for all who reside, work, do business, or visit our neighborhood. We stand against hatred, racism, xenophobia, discrimination and/or marginalization of any kind. We are committed to growing, nurturing and sustaining a community where all feel welcomed, safe and included.

### Alameda Neighborhood Association Contacts

**Steve Backer – Co-Chair**  
[stevebacker@gmail.com](mailto:stevebacker@gmail.com)

**Robert McConville – Co-Chair, NECN Representative**  
[rmmccconville@gmail.com](mailto:rmmccconville@gmail.com)

**Travis Weedman – Co-Chair**  
[travis@weedmandesignpartners.com](mailto:travis@weedmandesignpartners.com)

**Teresa St. Martin – Treasurer**  
[alamedatreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:alamedatreasurer@gmail.com)

**Mariah Dula – Secretary**  
[alamedapdx@gmail.com](mailto:alamedapdx@gmail.com)

**Annette Bendinelli – Newsletter Editor**  
[alamedanewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:alamedanewsletter@gmail.com)

**David Sparks – Layout and Design**  
[dave@hawthornemediagroup.com](mailto:dave@hawthornemediagroup.com)

The ANA meets on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 7pm at Fremont United Methodist Church.

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Prices are per issue. To place an ad, contact Teresa St. Martin at [alamedatreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:alamedatreasurer@gmail.com).

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February 10  
May 10  
August 10

Please submit pdf, jpg, or Adobe Distiller X-1A compliant artwork at 300dpi or greater.

# Susheela Jayapal Embraces Risk as She Seeks Change by Patty Farrell

**M**ultnomah County Commissioner Susheela Jayapal is not afraid to take risks. At the age of 16, she left her family in Southeast Asia and moved alone to the United States to go to college. At 22, after working two years as a financial analyst at an investment bank, she quit her job to go to law school. As a litigator in San Francisco and Portland, she took on corrupt and negligent bank officers, and provided free legal services to people seeking political asylum in the U.S.

Later, as General Counsel at adidas America, she helped create the company's first set of labor standards for contracted factories overseas. She left her legal career nearly 20 years ago to work in nonprofit leadership positions with a diverse group of Portland-area community organizations.

An Oregonian since 1994, Jayapal has lived in the Alameda area for over 25 years and is the mother of two Grant High School graduates. Her younger sister Pramila, who also moved to the United States to attend college at age 16, is a U.S. Congresswoman from Seattle.

In 2018, Jayapal won her first bid for political office, becoming the first Indian American to hold an elected county office in Oregon. She represents District 2 on the county board of commissioners, which encompasses most of North and Northeast Portland. She won re-election on May 17 to represent the District for four more years.

Jayapal recently sat down with *AlamedaPDX* to talk about the issues she's focused on for her district, including homelessness, mental health, youth employment and air quality.

**Q.** What issue most keeps you up at night?

**A.** Homelessness. No question about it. It's a humanitarian crisis. A country and community as wealthy as we are shouldn't have people living outside in tents and under tarps. We passed a public services ballot measure in 2020 – thank you, voters – and I believe we would be in a very different place were it not for the pandemic. Still, we're making progress.

**Q.** When can we expect to see some results?

**A.** The money from the ballot measure started coming in July of 2021, and in the first six months we moved over 2,000 people from streets or shelters into permanent housing. That's a lot, and it makes me very optimistic about what we can do IF we keep our focus on housing people. We need to have shelter options, we need small village options, but we can't let our desire to change how homelessness looks to affect our resolve to actually solve homelessness.

I understand why people are angry and upset at how Portland looks. We will continue to move people into housing. Metro is speeding up its trash pickup, and the mayor has allocated more

money for trash pickup in his new budget. As long as we can prevent even more people from moving into homelessness, then we will start to see results sooner rather than later.

**Q.** How can we address mental health and substance abuse, especially among people living on the streets?

**A.** There is no doubt we are seeing more people experiencing behavioral health issues and a greater acuity of those issues. Something already in the works is the Multnomah County Behavioral Health Resource Center. It will be a four-story building in downtown Portland that will be a one-stop shop for people suffering from behavioral health issues. The center, slated to open in fall of 2022, will include a community resource center, shelter beds and transitional housing.

Another huge need is to have places we can take people in the midst of a behavioral health crisis. We don't want to take them to jail, but we don't have other appropriate places. In response, several government agencies and community partners have created the Behavioral Health Emergency Coordinating Network. We plan to provide better coordination of emergency services and create a series of spaces people can be taken to in midst of crisis. While this effort is still in the planning phases, these groups hope to have the first crisis center up and running in the first half of 2023.

Finally, we need more treatment centers. Oregon is at the bottom of the list for behavioral health resources. And we need long-term housing for people who are struggling with behavioral health issues. Just putting someone who is experiencing acute mental health issues into an apartment doesn't work for everyone.

**Q.** Will you have the staff for these new initiatives?

**A.** That's a huge issue. Beyond the staffing shortages facing nearly every industry, people in social services are so underpaid. They're barely hanging on themselves. We must pay them more.

**Q.** What are some other issues you're tackling?

**A.** I think youth employment is an underappreciated issue. Research shows that when kids have jobs, they are engaged in school, stay healthy, and their extra income helps their family. It's also a violence-prevention strategy. The county is targeting students most in need - immigrants, children of color, foster youth and others traditionally underserved – and hopes to create year-round job opportunities for them.

I'm also focused on air quality. Multnomah County has the dirtiest air in the state, and North and Northeast Portland have the dirtiest air in the county. We have people living right



COUNTY COMMISSIONER SUSHEELA JAYAPAL SIGNS UP FOR A CULLY NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANUP EVENT.

next to freeways and industrial facilities that are emitting all kinds of toxins. Plus, wood smoke is really, really toxic. The county is looking to create new regulations that clean up toxic air and help reduce climate change.

**Q.** Who would you name as role models or mentors?

**A.** It may sound like a cliché, but it's the truth: my mother is my role model. In addition to doing all the great mom stuff, she volunteered when I was little. She started teaching English as a Second Language in her 30s. She started writing in her 40s for newspapers and published four books of popular history about places we lived. In her 60s, she started volunteering for counseling organizations, and then she got credentialed. In her 70s, she started seeing clients in her home as a counselor – and that was a big deal in India. In her 80s, she's still seeing clients. The way she has always remained engaged, reinventing herself by taking risks – just imagine being 67 and going to class with 24-year-olds!

**Q.** What are your next steps?

**A.** I'm term-limited in 2026, so I'll be looking for a new challenge. I hope to remain in politics, most likely at the local or national level.

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## LOCALLY OWNED: American Chimney and Masonry

*Editor's Note: This is the first in an occasional series on longtime, local business owners from our Northeast neighborhood area.*

American Chimney's General Manager, Steve Pietila, is a Portland native who grew up on Northeast 39th Avenue (now Cesar Chavez Blvd.) between Skidmore and Shaver streets. He has fond memories of playing in Wilshire Park and attending Beaumont School when it was still an elementary school. He has been with American Chimney since 1990, and he and his wife Julie have owned it together since 1994.

With over 35 years of experience, Pietila is a national leader in the chimney service industry. He is past President of the Chimney Safety Institute of America (CSIA), National Chimney Sweep Guild (NCSG), and the Oregon Chimney Sweep Association. In 2008 he received the highest honor in the trade, The NCSG President's Award. He is a CSIA-Certified Chimney Sweep and CSIA Instructor.

Steve enjoys working with customers and instilling a vision in his employees for providing outstanding customer service. In order to ensure that his customers get the highest quality of service possible, he encourages his staff to seek continued education and training which is financed by the company.

When not on the rooftops or in the office, you might find Steve paddling on the Willamette or Columbia Rivers (he trains with a local outrigger canoe racing club), teaching seminars to other chimney professionals, or volunteering at a local food pantry. He loves his hometown of Portland, and enjoys the incredible mix of small-town friendliness and metropolitan culture. He's been married to his wife, Julie, for over 40 years and they have three grown sons who all attended Alameda, Beaumont, and Grant High School.

Below, Pietila has provided answers to some common questions about chimney care.

### Why do chimneys need to be cleaned?

Both the National Fire Protection Association and the Oregon State Fire Marshall recommend chimneys be inspected at least

once a year and cleaned if needed. Chimneys need to be cleaned periodically because wood burning creates byproducts like soot and a stubborn deposit called creosote. Creosote is a sticky or candy-like glaze that results from incomplete combustion.

Over time, creosote can build up on the walls of the flue system, and because it's not only corrosive but also highly flammable, if it's not removed from the chimney, it becomes a fire hazard.

### Our home inspector didn't find any problems with the chimney, are we good to go?

Most home inspectors recommend that fireplaces and chimneys be inspected by a "competent professional." The best place to start is with a professional who is a CSIA Certified Chimney Sweep. As a nonprofit education entity, the Chimney Safety Institute of America has a lot of great resources for homeowners. They also have a way to search for CSIA Certified professionals by zip code. For more info, visit [www.csia.org](http://www.csia.org). A professional chimney inspection should include photos and a written report that explains the entire system to the homeowner, identifying any deficiencies. It should be presented clearly and objectively without pressure sales or scare tactics. Unsafe conditions are sometimes discovered, and so it is important that the technician can explain their findings to the homeowner's satisfaction.

### We notice water stains around the chimney inside the home, is this a chimney or roofing problem?

Well, there's no simple answer here. It could be one or the other, or both. A technician trained in the diagnosis of chimney and flashing leaks should be called to inspect the chimney and affected areas inside the home. Discoloration of the chimney can also be a sign that there are water issues even if there are no visible signs of water entry into the home. Water is one of the leading causes of damage to masonry including staining, loss of insulation value, freeze-thaw damage, deterioration, and ultimately structural failure. A proper diagnosis must be done so that an effective and appropriate solution can be recommended.



STEVE PIETILA, OWNER OF AMERICAN CHIMNEY & MASONRY

### What should we do if we hear birds or bats in the chimney?

Many birds are protected as they may be migratory. Nesting birds are typically swallows, but if they're roosting they could be Vaux Swifts. We recommend closing the damper and waiting until the birds have moved on. Because their droppings can carry dangerous parasites, we recommend having the chimney swept and inspected once the birds have left for the season. Then a proper chimney cap with a bird/animal/spark guard can be installed.

### My chimney is about 100 years old. Is it still safe to use?

It could be, but you'll want it inspected by a professional. Again, a CSIA Certified Chimney Sweep is your best source for a complete fireplace and chimney inspection. Being current on industry standards and building codes, you should expect to get a complete, objective inspection report that is explained to you in language that you can understand. Then any areas of concern can be addressed and solutions discussed. Depending on how you wish to use your fireplace and/or chimney, a plan can be made for bringing it up to current standards so you can enjoy it with peace of mind.

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We're excited about our upcoming move to our new Northeast Portland location and look forward to contributing to this vibrant area – both as real estate professionals and as your neighbors. Our new office at **2045 NE MLK Boulevard** will open later this year, and we hope you'll stop by to celebrate with us.

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# Homecoming for Time Traveling Windows by Doug Decker

Our 1912 Arts and Crafts bungalow has been home to six families in its 110 years and I've made a point of connecting with almost all of them. Seeing the house through the eyes and experiences of others has allowed my family to know this place in a unique way during our 30-plus years here, and to appreciate the changes in life, community and in the fabric of the house itself over that century.

During these pandemic years I've been busy with a special project to connect past and present here that's both tangible and personal. This spring it all came to fruition when modern-day craftsmen carefully reinstalled the three original stained-glass windows—now restored—that were removed from our house almost 50 years ago.

As a lover of old homes and a person who appreciates homecomings, it was a take-your-breath away moment when the last pane was put in place.

Tracking down these three windows, understanding the circumstance of their removal and their subsequent travels, and getting them back in shape to be reunited with the house has been a story marked by chapters of kindness, generosity, good luck and persistence. At the heart of this labor of love, it's been a story about putting pieces back together.

## The setting

In late 1911 and early 1912, builder William B. Donahue completed a lone bungalow on NE 30th Avenue, the only house on the block at the time, located just a half block east from the end of the Broadway Streetcar, right next to the temporary "tract office" of the Alameda Land Company. Donahue knew the house would be a demonstration of sorts to show what he could build for potential homebuyers. So even though it was just a simple bungalow, he added some nice touches, including stained-glass and beveled-glass windows in all the right places inside and out.

Donahue's floorplan included a breakfast nook between the formal dining room and the kitchen, with full wainscot paneling and a plate rail. For this welcoming, family-friendly room he chose a bank of high window openings to install a single sill and three rose-patterned stained-glass windows, most likely made in Portland by art glass maker Edward Bruns.

And there they presided as four families cycled through the house: wars, pandemics, business ventures, children, dogs, birthdays and deaths, leavetakings, joys and losses. All discussed and decided across the nook table under those three beautiful windows.

## The removal

The family who lived here from 1961 to 1975 loved this house. And when it came time for them to leave, they wanted to bring a piece of it with them, a souvenir and reminder of all their good memories here. The children were fledging and so they decided to each take a window, a gift from their father, who removed the sash and replaced them with three plain sheets of glass. The stained-glass panels were removed from the old window frames and put into new oak frames for display. One went to Arizona. One went to Spokane, and one stayed with the parents in Milwaukie. The windows continued to bring the comfort of family memories from their old home. Time passed and four more owners cycled through under the blank window-eyes of the breakfast nook. No one here knew anything different.



THESE THREE WINDOWS STARTED OUT HERE TOGETHER IN 1912 BUT WERE REMOVED IN THE 1970S. THE AUTHOR'S 18-YEAR QUEST TO FIND THEM AND BRING THEM HOME ENDED WITH A HAPPY HOMECOMING THIS SPRING.

## The discovery

As I researched the story of this house, I sought out the families who lived here and I even found a relative of builder William B. Donahue. Through oral history interviews and letters, I learned about the view from the porch across empty lots clear to the 33rd Street Woods. Brothers playing on the roof. The goat and wagon that came for a visit. The upright piano that lived in the front hall. The scary sawdust burner and dumbwaiter in the basement. So many stories.

One day in the 1990s, we hosted the Mom of the house from the 1960s on a brief impromptu visit when she dropped by the street to say hello to her old neighbors who still lived two doors down. When she walked through, wistfully, she mentioned the story of the windows in the nook. Because we had been dreaming about finding the old columns that had been torn out of the living room in the 1950s (which we later faithfully rebuilt based on those I found still in existence in another Donahue house) her mention of stained glass windows in the nook struck hard. A few weeks later, a photo and brief note arrived in the mail showing the one she still had hanging in her kitchen. We almost couldn't believe that rose-patterned window was once here. Through conversation over the months and years that followed, it emerged that her daughters still had the other two, which had become sentimental companions from their growing up years. I began to imagine bringing the windows back here where they started.

## The return

With the very thoughtful help of the son of this house (now grown and with a family of his own), and through persistent friendly stories from me about the home's history and our careful work of putting the pieces back together, a pathway began to emerge: when the family reached that point we all eventually reach of readiness to simplify our lives and possessions, the windows would be welcomed back home. Just as the family took solace in bringing them with them when they left, we would take solace in having them back. Back and forth correspondence, phone calls, soul searching, acceptance and finally, readiness. Two of the windows came first. Then a year later, the Mom of the house, now in her mid-80s, gave us the third one.

## The recovery

By then, I had fortunately found Jakub Jerzy Kucharczyk, the art glass master who runs The Glazieri based

here in Northeast Portland. Jakub is one of a handful of knowledgeable and capable artists and craftsmen nationally who know old glass like ours, and more importantly have the expertise to restore it using old ways and original materials.

When Jakub examined our well-traveled windows he pointed out the hand-blown crackle glass from Germany that make up the tiles across the bottom, the subtle peach and rose colored Kokomo catspaw granite glass of the flower petals, and the zinc channel borders that outline the shapes. Most of the zinc borders were in pretty good shape but a few needed new flux and solder. One of the crackle glass panels needed to be replaced, and Jakub had just the right old piece that looked like it came from the same batch. Even though a few pieces of the art glass were broken, we left them in favor of preserving the original materials, and Jakub made them as steady as could be. All of the glass needed a good clean-up, and all three panels were re-puttied.

Meanwhile, Stephen and Carl at Sashworks came out to measure the openings and teach us about window stops, reveals and hardware. Dale Farley at Wooddale Windows (also here in northeast Portland) took the dimensions and built new Douglas-fir sash for our old glass just the way the old-timers would, another lost art.

*(continued on page 6)*



THE SASHWRIGHT CO. TEAM PREPARES TO REMOVE THE CLEAR GLASS PANES THAT WERE PUT IN PLACE WHEN THE ORIGINAL WINDOWS WERE REMOVED IN THE 1970S.

(Homecoming For Time Traveling Windows, continued from Page 5)

Back and forth we shuttled, dropping off the windows with Jakub for restoration, retrieving the new sash from Dale and delivering it back so Jakub could install the restored windows. Once we had them home, we matched the stain to the existing interior window trim in the nook, and Marie painstakingly painted and stained them. Marie is so good at the painstaking stuff.

Fast forward to late April when the installation crew arrived. I believe they were as excited as we were to make this reunion possible. Out came the empty-eyed single panes. And very carefully, one at a time, the old windows - newly sashed - were fit and snugged back into the openings they once knew.

I still can't quite believe they're back. Every time we pass by, we stand and admire how these windows re-dignify

that space, how they bring even more color and life back into that room. It's the place you want to sit in the morning with a cup of tea to contemplate the day ahead, or for friendly conversation at dinner.

But these time traveling windows have made it something more, a kind of shrine to the house itself, its builder, the craftspeople who have helped repair and restore it over the years, and all the family members who pass through.



ROSE WINDOWS DETAIL



Neighborhood historian Doug Decker prepares history studies of homes, leads history walks, and makes presentations to groups interested in learning about local history. To learn more about Alameda and surrounding neighborhoods, visit Doug's website at [www.alamedahistory.org](http://www.alamedahistory.org).

## Do You have an Alameda History Question?

Are you interested in learning more about the history of our amazing neighborhood, your street, or the surrounding area? If so, AlamedaPDX and Doug Decker invite you to send your question to [doug@alamedahistory.org](mailto:doug@alamedahistory.org), and Doug will respond in our next issue. Submissions must be 75 words or less.

## Alameda Book Clubs Promote Discussion, Build Friendships by David Bruce Spencer

By one recent estimate, there are more than 5 million book club members in the United States, and it can seem like almost everyone you know belongs to one. For our Summer issue, *AlamedaPDX* asked some of our neighbors about their clubs, what they're reading now, and what books they've especially enjoyed. Here's what we learned.

### Literary Ladies create an intellectual experience

Peggy Valenti and Susan Lazareck belong to Literary Ladies, a book club that primarily reads contemporary fiction. The group came together in 2014 when many of the original members' husbands played poker together on Friday nights, so the wives formed a book club. It's a small group, with four current members and only nine at its largest.

Valenti says she likes a smaller group because "it allows plenty of time for individuals to have their say." She notes that "We've had members come and go over the years. We want to focus on the books and the intellectual experience."

Lazareck emphasizes, "The give-and-take is important," and adds that "we try to pick books that will challenge and engage us."

Every six months, the club has a selection meeting. Each member brings three to five book titles for consideration, then the group talks through them. They try to make the selections inclusive, not skewed to any particular person's tastes. Some want to read only fiction, while some want only mysteries. They adjust the schedule for the upcoming meetings after discussing and selecting from the proposed books.

The club usually meets in members' homes, and the host tries to serve treats that relate to the book. For example, when discussing Lisa See's *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane*, they held

a tea ceremony during the meeting. Like many during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Literary Ladies have held meetings via Zoom for the last year or so.

**What Valenti likes best about the group:** "We expect everyone to read the book. It's not just a social gathering. We are challenging ourselves, opening a door to understanding others. I feel like members have developed a really nice friendship and can share ways their own lives mirror things in the discussion."

**What Lazareck likes best about the group:** "The respectful way of expressing likes and dislikes, of talking about the quality of writing, making it a rigorous intellectual experience. We also take a thumbs-up or thumbs-down poll on how we feel about the book overall, and explain why."

**What the group is reading now:** *The Personal Librarian*, by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray

**Past favorites:** Valenti's include *The Heart's Invisible Furies* by John Boyne and *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee, while Lazareck lists *Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders, *The Tortilla Curtain* by T.C. Boyle, *Deacon King Kong* by James McBride, and *When All Is Said* by Anne Griffin.

### The Book Group has lasted 30 years

Wendy Busch told us, "It's just the 'book group' —it has no official name." But they've been meeting on the first Friday of the month since 1980. While the member list has changed since the inception, this club has had the same nine members for the last 30 years. Busch says, "I joined in '92 and I'm the new member."

While Busch and one other woman live in or near Alameda, members are spread all over the general Portland area: West Linn, Oregon City, and McMinnville. Their book lists are primarily fiction, but if someone reads a non-fiction work that's especially interesting, the group will consider it. They have an easy system for selection: Each month a member becomes "the ferret," who brings four or five potential titles to the group. Each member votes for two titles, and the one with the most votes gets selected. The runner-up often gets another chance at subsequent meetings.

At the monthly meeting, each book has a designated researcher who brings reviews, author information, maps or whatever is appropriate for the discussion. Pre-pandemic, the group rotated meetings among members' houses and the meeting included a full meal. As members begin to retire, meetings moved from evenings to afternoons. With the advent of Covid-19 restrictions, they meet via Zoom and have their own food. They're hoping for more outdoor opportunities to get together as Covid restrictions ease and the weather gets warmer.

Each summer, the group has "book club at the beach." They spend an August weekend at member Jane Ediger's beach house, and each person brings a short story for discussion. They read the stories beforehand and talk through each one.

**What Busch likes best about the group:** "What I like most about book group is the social connection. We have a great group of women with diverse backgrounds, and you read things you wouldn't necessarily read on your own. We really do stick to discussing the book, and I appreciate the commitment. People actually schedule vacations around meetings!"

(continued on page 7)



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(Book Groups, continued from Page 6)



(L TO R) "BOOK GROUP" HAS BEEN MEETING FOR 30 YEARS; LITERARY LADIES' MEETINGS OFTEN INCLUDE SNACKS RELATED TO BOOK THEMES; THE MADELEINE BOOK CLUB HOSTS A CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON.

**What the group is reading now:** *Lab Girl* by Hope Jahren

**Past favorites:** *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles, *Let the Great World Spin* by Colum McCann, *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi, *Deacon King Kong* by James McBride

**The Madeleine Book Club reaches out to all**

Jody McDonald started the Madeleine Book Club in 2009, with eight members in the parish's rectory dining room. At last count, the club had 137 on its mailing list.

Club members are mostly Madeleine parishioners, but the roster includes non-parishioners and even an occasional agnostic. Many no longer live in the neighborhood; some are in another state, like Washington or Arizona; some even live outside of the country.

Gretchen Stevenson took over as coordinator in 2014. She notes that "the club is a ministry. That is, a way to draw people together to discuss life's subjects, to get people involved socially and expand contacts, and promote involvement with fellow parishioners."

Participation has many levels. Some members read the books but don't attend the meetings. Some follow prayer requests that are sent out to the mailing list. Meetings are open to all in the parish, and the group determines the following year's readings in May of each year. Members submit recommendations, then the group votes.

Madeleine's pastor, Father Mike Biewend, also chooses one book for discussion during the year. Each year's booklist can vary widely, depending on what people have read and liked. Or at the very least, a trustworthy source recommended the book. "Most choices turn out to be great ones," Stevenson notes.

The club has three special events per year. "We have a Christmas luncheon in December. Another month, we discuss Father Mike's recommended book. At our spring social, we have a taco salad bar potluck and vote on books for the next year's list. We also hold a white elephant-style book exchange," she says.

**What Stevenson likes best about the group:** "It's an opportunity to be exposed to books I wouldn't have read on my own. With a diverse group and different opinions, I'm pleasantly surprised by the things we read."

**What the group is reading now:** *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi

**Past favorites:** *Last Bus to Wisdom* by Ivan Doig, *The Boys in the Boat* by D.J. Brown

**The Alameda Book Group brought strangers together**

The club doesn't really have a name. They call themselves the "Alameda book group" because most of its members live here and that's where the group started in 2017. You might say the club was created by accident.

Member Renata Ackermann says, "Someone from a different book group posted a call for members on the Nextdoor social media site. Too many people replied and the group closed. Someone suggested that all those people who were looking for a group to join should get together. And that's how it started — we were the 'leftovers.'" They currently have eight members.

Everyone lives in the Alameda neighborhood except for one person, who moved away after the first year but remains an active member. When the group first met on April 25, 2017, none of the members knew each other. The club meets at a different member's house once a month, usually on Tuesday evenings. The host provides a light dinner or snacks, and their

December tradition is a cookie exchange.

"With some great cooks and hosts in our group, the food has improved over time," Ackermann says. The group met on Zoom during the pandemic, but people didn't like that as much so they started meeting in person outdoors on Sunday afternoons, and brought their own food.

"At some point, we started a new ritual where the person who hosts usually has a poem they choose and read," Ackermann says. She adds that the book selection has been a bit haphazard.

"We don't have a particular focus. We've done mostly fiction, with some non-fiction books in there as well. At the beginning of the year, everyone comes up with a list of books for the group to read, and each member brings a couple of suggestions. Then we pick from that list," she says. The list of titles can change spontaneously. "We usually try to read books that most members have not read already, but that isn't a firm rule either," she adds.

**What Ackermann likes best:** "We have created a circle of friends. A couple of people have been struggling with health issues and we have helped out with a home-cooked meal, some company, phone calls, cards. We have one member who is moving to France permanently and she will be greatly missed!"

**What the group is reading now:** *These Precious Days* by Ann Patchett

**Past favorites:** *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* by Olga Tokarszuk, *Deacon King Kong* by James McBride

## Windermere Plans Move to Iconic NE Portland Building

Windermere Realty Trust has announced that an iconic, art deco building in Northeast Portland will soon be home to one of its top-producing branches. Later this year, nearly 100 Windermere brokers will pack up their desks and move from the Lloyd Center Tower to an historic, 1930's era building located at 2045 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Windermere is currently rejuvenating the facility in order to create a more welcoming and engaging space.

"With most of our brokers already working in Alameda and all of Northeast Portland, this new, centrally located space will allow them to provide even better service for their clients," said Brian Bostick, Managing Principal Broker at Windermere. "Our new location will allow brokers to nimbly serve all neighborhoods in Northeast and Southeast Portland, as well as quickly hop on a bridge to serve clients who have real estate needs on the other side of the river.

Bostick added, "When our clients visit their brokers, they will be able to take advantage of convenient on-site parking, and conduct business in a fully remodeled



THIS 1930s ERA BUILDING WILL HOUSE WINDERMERE REALTY TRUST.

building that still retains its original architectural character."

Designed by renowned Portland architect Francis Marion Stokes, the 1937 art deco building was known as the Williams & Company Building, where Williams Saratoga Potato Chips were produced. In 1960, the potato chip company was purchased by the Frito Company (later known as Frito-Lay). The building has since had multiple owners, including a home security business and an investment consulting firm.

According to Bostick, what excites Windermere most about the move is the opportunity to more closely connect with community members. The new office will serve as a flagship for Windermere and will host classes and events, as well as fundraisers for the Windermere Foundation — the company's charitable arm.

"We're excited to serve as an anchor for community collaboration, enabling us to continue our commitment of enriching and giving back to the diverse neighborhoods in which we live and work," he noted.

Once renovations are complete, Windermere will celebrate with a grand opening event for its local brokers, the community and the company as a whole.

"We eagerly await our move," said Bostick. "We are excited about the opportunity to preserve a bit of Portland architectural history, participate in the continued revitalization of the Northeast Portland community, and work more closely with our neighbors to achieve their real estate goals and dreams."

## Local Cartoonist Reaches National Audience

by R. Peter Mogielnicki

If you subscribe to either Willamette Week or The New Yorker, or even if you just read either of them in your dentist's waiting room, you may have found yourself chuckling over a cartoon with the initials "OSB" printed neatly in one corner. That stands for Oren Simon Bernstein, a local Beaumont-Wilshire neighbor who has turned his love of drawing into a side gig as a nationally known cartoonist.

As a designer of mechanical engineering products in his "day job," Bernstein might seem a bit serious and reserved. But give him a bit of spare time, an iPad, and an Apple Pencil, and funny things start to happen.

For as long as he can remember Bernstein has loved drawing, and he began doing sketches of what he calls "funny stuff" about four years ago. He found cartooning relaxing, particularly during the recent political turmoil and Covid-19 pandemic. As his drawing skills and confidence increased, he set his sights on getting published in The New Yorker.

He consulted with another local and nationally known cartoonist, Tom Toro, who gave him helpful guidance and feedback. He also sought the advice of other well-known Portland cartoonists who appear in The New Yorker, including Shannon Wheeler, Maggie Larson, and Mat Barton and learned that there is more to the final piece than just the joke itself. For example, employing neutral emotional expressions lets viewers identify more easily with situations, and using background and subject placement draws a viewer's attention to the key elements of the image. Arrays of short wiggly lines serve this purpose in many of Bernstein's works.

Eventually, Bernstein began submitting cartoons to The New Yorker, but faced repeated rejections. The magazine receives about 1,000-2,000 submissions a week, and only accepts about 18-20. Bernstein wasn't discouraged, however, and his work has now appeared in the publication three times. In 2021, he also accepted an offer to be a weekly contributor to Portland's Willamette Week newspaper cartoon page.

Professionally, Bernstein has worn many hats. He was born

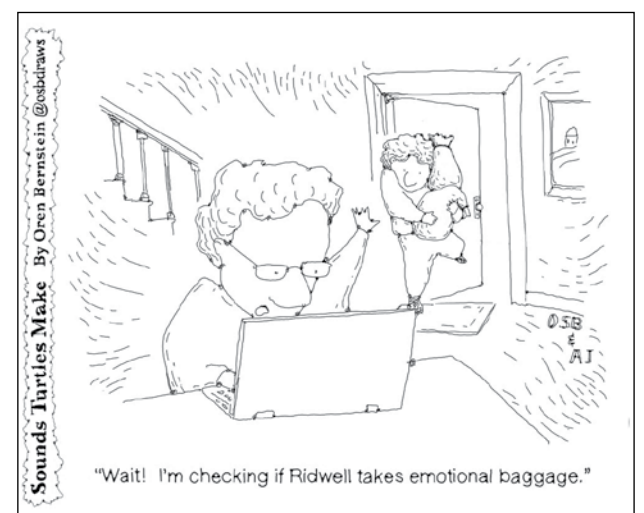
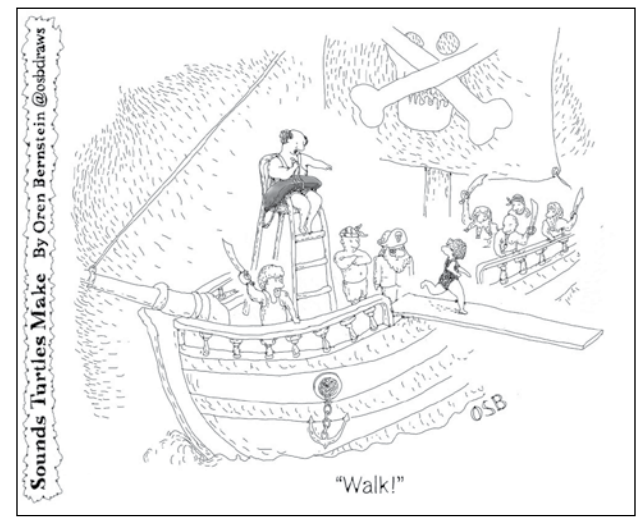
in Israel and spent much of his childhood in England, then moved to Indiana during his high school years. He studied mechanical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before eventually settling in Portland, where he began working for an electric car startup. He then spent several years designing orthopedic hardware, and in 2017 formed his own mechanical engineering and design consultancy, OSB Research and Development.

He has since worked on equipment for everything from the rapid diagnosis of malaria, to a CPAP mouthpiece for patients with sleep apnea, to hardware for the repair of injured hands. He also does pro bono work for Sign Fracture Care International, a humanitarian organization that builds sustainable, orthopedic surgical tools for developing countries. Since the onset of the pandemic, he's also done double duty as a part-time, stay-at-home dad, corralling his two energetic sons while his life partner and sometime muse, Julie, works as a geriatric physician assistant at Oregon Health & Science University.

So where do Bernstein's cartoon ideas come from? He notes that they sometimes just pop into his head, and other times a theme evolves and he reworks it over time. Sometimes he'll simply pick a theme out of the air and brainstorm elements of it by himself or with others. Often, he incorporates two common but unrelated images in his work. For example, he might blend a pirate captain and pool lifeguard, who admonishes a prisoner not to run while walking the plank. Or he might poke fun at familiar pandemic behavior, showing a dog failing to respond to the command "shake" but offering a friendly elbow instead.

Most of his cartoons are hilarious right off the blocks, but like many New Yorker cartoons, some can be harder to "get." They take a little more thought, and sometimes even a bit of insider knowledge. Bernstein notes he is still evolving a personal style, but thinks his more recent characters - large headed, small handed, genderless individuals - have promise. It's going to be fun for readers and fans to watch how this evolves.

To see more Oren Bernstein cartoons, visit [@osbdraws](https://www.instagram.com/osbdraws) on Instagram



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# Owner Overcomes Odds to Open Alberta Coffee Shop by Blythe Knott

It's no secret that most people find it very difficult to land on their feet after they are released from prison. Landlords don't want to rent to you. You might be trying to regain custody of your kids. People don't want to hire you.

This was very much Shalimar Williams' experience when she left prison several years ago. Williams was born in Northeast Portland at Emanuel Hospital to a mom who was an addict and a dad who was in prison. She spent most of her childhood in a rural part of California with her aunt and uncle. In high school, Williams moved back to Portland after her mom got sober. She spent about a week at Jefferson High School before transferring to Roosevelt. Everyone was trying their best, but Williams struggled to adjust to her new urban home.

Eventually, Williams ended up in prison. During her two years there, she "fell in love with coffee and Jesus." She also enrolled in classes at PCC. When she was released, she discovered firsthand the barriers that exist to reentering society with a felony record. Parole stipulations were intensive. She was made to enter Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous, even though those weren't issues for her. No one wanted to hire her. No one wanted to rent to her. These roadblocks made it extremely hard to stay on the right track.

There are some support systems for parolees. Many of them are for men, as the prison system is built around men much more than it is for women. After hitting roadblock after roadblock, Williams decided that her best way forward was to work for herself. She wrote a business plan for a coffee cart. She knocked on doors, tried to find a location, tried to find support. She knew she wanted to be in Northeast Portland because she wanted to benefit the "neighborhood she had terrorized" as a teenager.

Finally, a local realtor decided to take a chance on Williams. He owns a building at NE 26th and Alberta and he offered to let her rent it to open up a coffee shop. She poured her heart into the space - decorating it,

working on the menu, working on the drink selection. In January 2022, Holy Beanz Coffee opened.

Williams exclusively hires women who are coming out of the prison system, or are in recovery. She mentors them as they work to get their lives back together. The slogan of Holy Beanz is "purpose in a cup." Williams is drawing directly from her past struggles to strive to make the world a better place.

Today, the coffee shop is many things. It's a lovely coffee shop. It's a meeting place for attorneys, the gang task force, police, old gang members. It's a safe community destination where people can gather and be a part of something good.

Williams is starting to use the space to offer classes and networking events. She offers training on becoming a barista. People donate their time to offer instruction on financial literacy, or improving credit scores, or preventing eviction. A photographer comes and takes professional headshots for a reduced price. There are open mic nights, jazz nights, and community chess days. Williams also speaks publicly, mostly at schools, about her life's path. She's a charismatic person with a compelling story, and she's interested in expanding that segment of her portfolio.

I asked Williams how others can help support her work, beyond visiting Holy Beanz for a snack or some coffee. She suggested that people offer their services to those who need help. Perhaps you know something about the law, or housing, or custody issues, or finances, or job opportunities, and you could be part of a Holy Beanz networking event. You could mentor someone, or hire Williams to speak at a company event. As Williams notes, there are so many ways to make this world a better place.

For more info, contact Shalimar Williams at [holybeanzcoffee@gmail.com](mailto:holybeanzcoffee@gmail.com) or visit [holybeanzcoffee.com](http://holybeanzcoffee.com).



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## Alameda Couple Undertakes Fifth Renovation by Dan LaGrande

For Alameda residents lamenting the demolition of beautiful old - but often run-down - homes in our neighborhood, take heart.

An ambitious and hard-working couple in our neighborhood is beginning extensive repair and renovation work on a classic 100-year old house on NE 23rd Avenue, near Siskiyou Street. This is the fifth home they have saved and renovated over the past six years.

The last home that Jerod and Maria Fitzgerald returned to its former glory is the one they are living in now, at NE 25th near Knott. Asked about the hard work and challenges of renovating and preserving old homes, Maria replied, "We love the work, this is our idea of fun. We enjoy the challenge of restoring and saving these beautiful old houses."

The one they are working on now has special challenges.

"In the mid 1980s, there was a major fire in this house that started in the kitchen and spread to the second story and attic before it was put out," Jerod said. "My dad was a fireman in northeast Portland then, although he doesn't recall this fire. Fortunately, the fast response from the fire department saved the house."

Jerod, who is a Portland fireman today as well as a general contractor, explained that after the fire the house was repaired and the occupants continued to live in it. As some neighbors know, the house was owned since the early 1970s by Maria Gascon, who as a child survived four years in Auschwitz and other concentration camps in German-occupied Poland. After the war, she married an American soldier and they moved to the U.S. Following the death of her husband in a traffic accident near Bend, Oregon in 1971, Maria and her children moved to Portland.

"Sadly, over the years since then," Jerod said, "the house became run-down, and after Maria Gascon died it came up for sale. We saw its potential, and after some spirited bidding we purchased it last year."

However, because the house is in a historic district, work could not begin right away. "We wanted to add a covered back porch as well as a garage, driveway and off-street parking," Jerod said. "This required approval from the historic district, as well as permits from the City of Portland. That process took about seven months, so we couldn't start work until this year. Since then, we've made good progress."

"An important improvement has been upgrading the front porch and replacing the plywood floor with hardwood, and converting the attic into a full third floor," Maria said. "It will make the house more livable and appealing to a broader scope of people."

"Additionally, we've done major interior structural work from the top floor down to the full basement, to increase the load-bearing capacity of the house with full use of the third floor," Jerod explained. "When completed, this will be a 4,200 square foot home with 6 bedrooms and 4 and a half bathrooms, a spacious and elegant home for anyone looking for lots of space and amenities."

There are other large and beautifully maintained homes nearby, so while it will be a big, spacious house, it will be compatible with other homes along the streets near the Madeleine Church and School, and within easy walking distance to Alameda School and businesses along NE Fremont.

"Because we want the house to display its beauty and grandeur, we are also changing the approach to the front porch and entrance with new stairs that will come up from the sidewalk to a landing, and then come up gracefully to the front entrance," Maria explained, "so this will enhance its curb appeal."

If all goes as planned, Jerod and Maria expect this major renovation and the improvements will be completed sometime this summer. At that point they expect to put it on the market for sale. Maria is a realtor with Windermere Realty Trust, so she will handle the listing.



THIS 100-YR-OLD HOME IS THE FIFTH THE FITZGERALDS HAVE RENOVATED.



A NEW BACK PORCH IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

And given the desire of many buyers for a classic and beautifully restored home in the Alameda and Irvington neighborhoods, they are hopeful the home will soon have a new owner.

And for nearby neighbors, there will likely be a collective sigh of relief that thanks to the hard work, dedication, and foresight of Jerod and Maria, this home will not be torn down, and instead will be preserved for another hundred years for families of the future.

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# Picture Windows: Connecting With Ukraine Interview by Gail Jeidy

*We are connected more than we realize. Alameda neighbor Shari MacDonald Strong and I are both writers, and she and her family own and inhabit the first home I purchased in Alameda several decades ago. I met with Shari to talk about Ukraine, her family members' home of origin.*

**What is your connection to Ukraine?** In 2010, my husband Craig and I took our three children—Eugenia, 10, and twins Will and Mac, 7, to Ukraine, so we could meet and adopt 16-year-old twins Dasha and Alina. We wanted a big family, and we wanted to help kids who needed homes, who were not likely to be adopted, and that included older children.

I'd felt drawn to children in Eastern European orphanages since I was in my early 20s, when I saw all the news stories about Romanian orphanages. Romania was closed to adoption by the time we were ready for a child. We adopted our daughter Eugenia from Russia when she was three, which was considered an older child adoption, as most people want babies. And then when we were ready for another child, Russia no longer allowed adoptions by U.S. citizens. That's when we turned to Ukraine.

## Tell us about your experience in Ukraine.

We traveled to Kiev, where we got our official referral to meet Dasha and Alina at their orphanage in east Ukraine. We then traveled east to the Sumy region, bordering Russia, and stayed in the city of Okhtyrka, the girls' hometown. Each day, a driver took us on a 45-minute trip to the orphanage to spend time with them.

Soon, the orphanage director gave us a guest apartment in one of the orphanage buildings. We lived there full-time for about six weeks. A small river ran through the middle of the orphanage grounds, and we spent our time swimming and playing with the kids. After the adoption court date in August, my husband took our three youngest children home to start the school year. I stayed in Ukraine with the older girls while we finished adoption paperwork and got their passports. We came home to Portland in early September, and they started Grant High School shortly afterward.

## When Russia first attacked Ukraine, what were you and your daughters' thoughts?

They both were very shocked. In the weeks leading up to

Russia's invasion, I watched the news closely. The week before, when I told Dasha what the experts were saying was going to happen, she didn't believe it. She said there are always rumors that Russia is going to invade Ukraine but it never happens. She thought it was all Russian posturing.

## Tell us why you started fundraising, who your fund serves and how people can donate?

When our family was in Ukraine, my husband and I, and our kids, grew to love many of the children at the orphanage. Those kids were family to our oldest daughters. Dasha especially has kept in touch with many of her friends there.

After the invasion, many Ukrainians reached out to her, begging for financial help. Necessities were no longer available or were extremely expensive, and some families had to move around to stay safe. Dasha sent people money, then initiated our fundraiser since the need was so great. We divide monies we receive among five friends of our daughters, including women from their hometown and from the orphanage. The GoFundMe link is <https://gofund.me/f9d4a201>.

## Can you offer an update on the families your fund is helping?

Several of the families have been on the move, trying to find the safest place to be. One woman is in the hospital right now, about to have a baby. This is a young woman I really love. I'm so scared for her. I can't imagine having a baby under these conditions. I think about her every day and wish I could do more to help.

## In addition to your fund, what other giving opportunities do you recommend?

The adoption facilitator who helped our family in 2010 is Anastasia "Nastya" Ovsyanik. She's been working with the international charity fund Eternal Values to support children from Mykolayiv, Kharkiv, Lugansk, and Donetsk. This group of kids includes orphans young enough to be in the baby orphanages, to those old enough to live in group homes for minors but who have aged out of the orphanages and are not yet adults.

Starting in 2009 (prior to the war), the group brought kids to the U.S. as part of an orphan hosting program, and it also provided outside support to orphanages, which tend not



SHARI MACDONALD STRONG AND LILYA, A UKRAINIAN GIRL WHOSE FAMILY IS BEING HELPED BY THE GOFUNDME EFFORT.

to be well-funded. Since the war, they've been providing practical support to orphans in need. Nastya told me that the most current needs are for medicine, school supplies, crafts, underwear, socks, summer clothing and shoes, toiletries, and phones and tablets so children can attend online school. Nastya also shared heartbreaking videos, including one of children in a darkened orphanage basement, as one of them plays the guitar and another sings. She said it was taken before they were evacuated. Donations can be made to Nastya's PayPal address: [adoption\\_advice@yahoo.com](mailto:adoption_advice@yahoo.com). The group can provide receipts and photos to interested donors. I'm not personally involved in this program, but I trust Nastya.

## Can you speak to the impacts of the war on Russian citizens?

In 2007, our family hosted an orphan from Russia for the summer, and we are still Facebook friends. She's an adult now and occasionally posts photos from her life: a fishing trip, her son's pageant at school. When the war began, I messaged her and asked if she was okay. She messaged back that her family was fine and said nothing more—almost as if the war wasn't happening. I took that as a sign that I shouldn't talk about the war. If she is against it, as I hope she is, I can't put her in a position of saying so in print. It would be too dangerous. I wanted to ask if she was hungry, if she had money. I wanted to ask if she'd seen any protests and what she really believes about the war. I hope someday we'll be able to talk about it.

## What can you share about the Ukrainian people that we may not know or understand?

It's easy now to see how patriotic Ukrainians are. We see the Ukrainian flags in photos posted online, for example, and we hear them say "Slava Ukraini", which means "Glory to Ukraine!" But that patriotism isn't just a war-related phenomenon. One of the first things our daughter Dasha said to me after coming to the U.S. is "I am a Ukrainian patriot." The Ukrainian people are very proud of their young country. They are a strong, passionate people. It doesn't surprise me that they've had so much success defending their homeland.

## Any parting thoughts on the impact of this war?

It has been startling to see a place that means so much to our family be brutally demolished through endless acts of war. I am ideologically very anti-war. I believe most wars are avoidable. Yet I can't look at what is happening in Ukraine and not wish for the U.S. to intervene more. I'm not saying unequivocally that we should. I have no idea whether doing so would make things better or worse on a global scale. I don't have any answers. I really just feel heartbroken.

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## The Finale of The Big Float by Willie Levenson

It is bittersweet to announce that this year's 10th anniversary of The Big Float on Sunday, July 10th will be the final installment of the Human Access Project's annual river celebration (at least for awhile).

As the event founder, this year's TBF feels like a party that is 12 years in the making, and a beautiful way to put a bow on an event that has been both a powerful catalyst for change and for fun. TBF truly became the movement disguised as a party I hoped it would be.

Team HAP is now focused on ensuring that The Big Float X is the very best yet and will be remembered as Portland's grandest river celebration – a parade, float, and beach bash with live music. Our three-band music lineup will be announced soon.

When a handful of friends and I founded Human Access Project in 2010, we decided our mission would be to "Transform Portland's relationship with the Willamette River." People told us we were crazy to swim in the river, that no one would come to The Big Float, that the Willamette River was a lost cause and worse! We researched and understood the science, which showed that after decades of water quality improvements, including The Big Pipe, the Willamette River is now safe to swim in.

We knew if we could develop the right outreach and platforms for people to discover the Willamette River in a positive way, there would be no looking back. Our goals included opening downtown beaches and swimming areas, changing city policy, developing a positive river culture that feels safe and inviting to all, and to have fun doing it!

We have done all those things and more, including activating Poet's Beach and Audrey McCall Beach, Kevin Duckworth Dock and Fire House Dock. We hosted four Mayoral Swims, three Valentine's Dips, and gave a massive lift to city policies around swimming in the Willamette River. In fact, this year Portland Parks and Recreation will identify and promote five "safer" swimming areas - Poet's Beach, Audrey McCall Beach, Sellwood, Cathedral Park and Tom McCall Bowl to the public. This year will also be the 10-year anniversary of the city's beloved River Hugger Swim Team.

Do not fear, Team HAP will continue full steam ahead on our full plate of work including mitigation of the Ross Island Lagoon Harmful Algae Bloom, river access for the new Burnside Bridge, and replacement of the Holman Dock (near the Hawthorne Bridge), and the Sellwood and Cathedral Park Docks. Plus we're working on development of proper beach parks at Audrey McCall Beach, Poet's, Cathedral and the granddaddy of them all, Tom McCall Bowl.

Our number one priority remains developing a solution to the Ross Island Lagoon Harmful Algae Bloom. I feel confident we will find and implement a solution. Once we do, HAP pledges to bring back The Big Float at least one more time to celebrate the completion of this critical work.

*Alameda resident Willie Levenson is the founder and ringleader of the Human Access Project and can be reached at [willie@humanaccessproject.com](mailto:willie@humanaccessproject.com). For more info on TBF X, go to [thebigfloat.com](http://thebigfloat.com).*



THE BIG FLOAT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER TO ENJOY THE WILLAMETTE RIVER.

### THE BIG FLOAT X

Sunday, July 10, 11:00 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.

#### We need volunteers!

Don't want to float but love the idea of being a part of our grand river party? We need volunteers to help support TBF X! Most important are river safety monitors to assist our river rescue-trained lifeguards to provide keen eyes on the water. If you have a kayak, canoe or SUP please join our team, we provide basic training. Or sign up on land to help with registration, inflating innertubes, or filling general needs. All volunteers will be fed and will receive a limited-run TBF X T-shirt.

So, sign up, invite friends, volunteer! It would be awesome to see an Alameda floatilla! Join the riverlution at [thebigfloat.com](http://thebigfloat.com)!

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