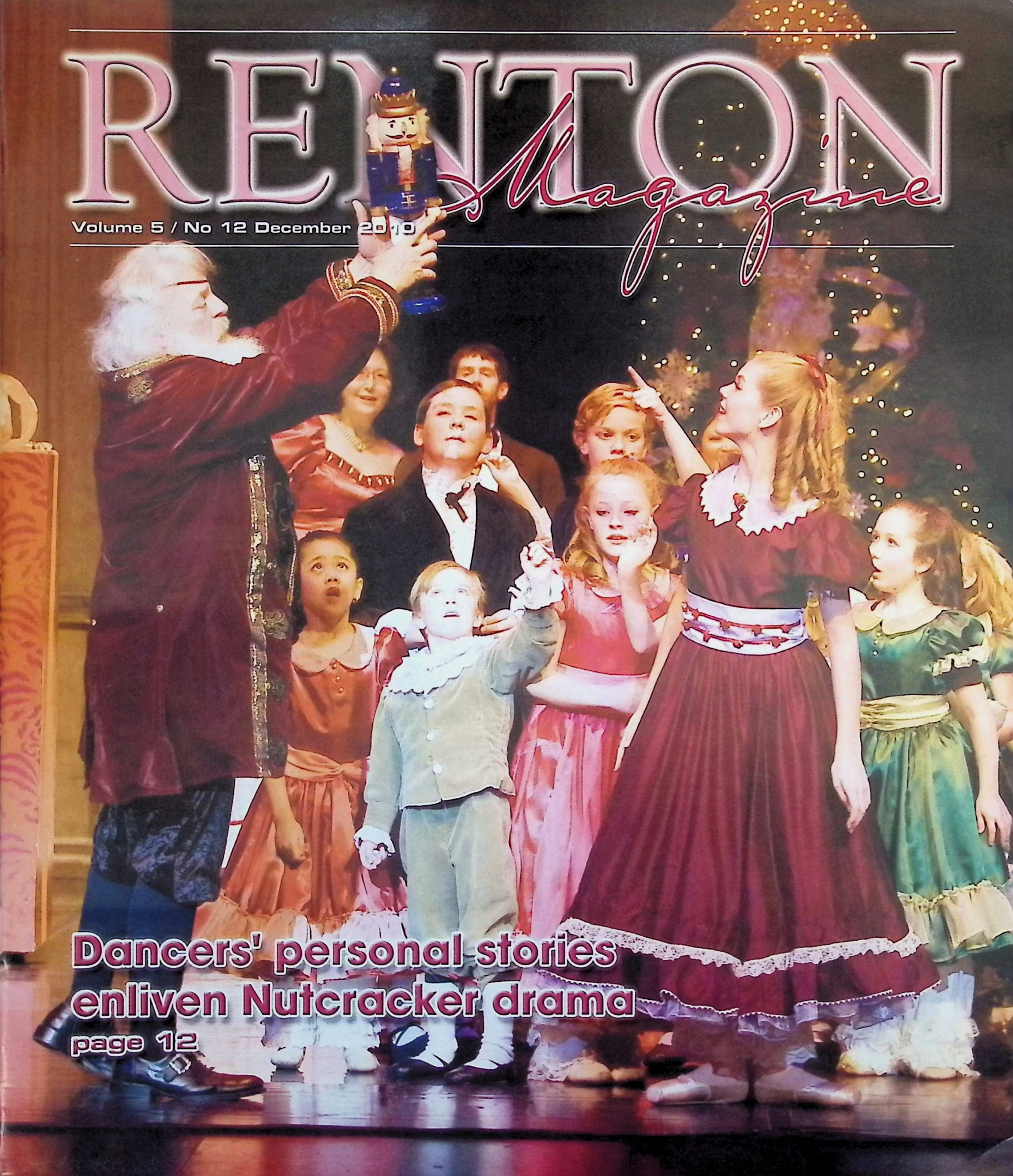


RENTON *Magazine*



Volume 5 / No 12 December 2010

**Dancers' personal stories
enliven Nutcracker drama**

page 12

GROCERY OUTLET *bargain market*

Our Bargains will bowl you over

Who are we?

We're a local, family-owned business that lives (and loves) to save you money.

How do we do it?

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What else?

Our meat is produced in America, fresh-cut with high trim standards and is all select or above. Our everyday prices for fresh meat are significantly lower than conventional supermarkets.

You'll find great deals on fresh produce and Rexall vitamins, plus lots of other surprising discoveries.

It's like a treasure hunt. Only without the pirates!



Erin & Jeff McNeil
Independent Owners/Operators



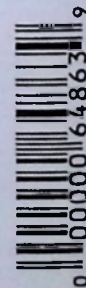
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publisher's note



One of my dark secrets is that I just don't understand Daylight Savings Time. Arizona, where I spent most of my younger years, doesn't observe Daylight Savings Time. If I can figure out what to do to the clocks, I'm doing well enough. "Spring forward, fall back," just doesn't make any sense to me. And all the arguments about why we should do it and the good it's supposed to do for us, simply pass me by like an express bus on a rainy day.

Most years, I go to Arizona once or twice to visit my family. It's good to see them. But when I'm there, I realize that I miss the Big Sky. We have beautiful trees and mountains here. But that brings in the horizon. Our winter weather doesn't help much. You don't hear about people in Arizona getting the blues in winter. Just the opposite, there's a steady stream of visitors escaping to

Arizona's warmth, light and big skies. The license plates tell the stories as you see a long list of northern states.

Wintering in the southwest isn't practical for most of us. Yet every day I meet people who are as sunny and cheerful as can be. How do they do it? Some people swear by exercise, or getting extra light through a special visor or light box.

Sometimes just a glass of wine and a good book or having friends over for dinner makes me smile as much as anything. Did you ever notice that pastas and heavier foods



Diana Kramer
PUBLISHER

that you'd never eat in the summer start to call to you when the days go dark and the wind turns cold. That sets up another battle to manage until Spring.

But what's your solution? As the clouds roll in, the days get short and you start to feel the cold twinge of rain on your cheeks, what do you do to help you smile? How do you fight the blues?

I think we have some smart, experienced readers with ways to fight the blues that I've never considered. I want to share some of them in an upcoming issue. Email your ideas to blues@rentonmagazine.com. The more your idea is affordable and available to others, the more likely we will share it. So, help out your neighbors and give us the benefit of your experience.

~Thanks.

RENTON Magazine

VOL. 5 | ISSUE 12

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Renton Magazine is mailed each month to homes in Renton, East Plateau and Fairwood. Total circulation is 18,000. Publisher retains the right to reject any advertising. Copyright 2010 Puget Sound Publishing Co. All rights reserved. Use or reproduction, in part or full, without written permission is prohibited. Back issues and single copies are \$3.00. Subscriptions are available for \$25 per year.

Puget Sound Publishing Co.
15 South Grady Way, Suite 514
Renton, WA 98057

contents

4 **upcoming events**

8 **kirby unti**

9 **salvation army**

10 **camp fire usa**

14 **fresh tastes**

16 **pet care**

17 **around the garden**

18 **cedar grove**

20 **renton history**

22 **library news**

COVER:

Evergreen City Ballet produces *The Nutcracker*, with performances in Renton and Auburn. Young dancers from Renton and surrounding areas are among the performers. At least one family moved to Renton so their daughter could more easily study with Evergreen City Ballet. Photo courtesy of Chris Clark. See story page 12.

important phone #'s

City Hall
425.430.6400

Chamber of Commerce
425.226.4560

Community Center
425.430.6700

Fire Dept
(non emergency)
425.430.7000

Renton Library
425.226.6043

Renton Highlands Library
425.277.1831

Police Dept
(non emergency)
425.430.7500

Puget Sound Energy
1.888.225.5773

Renton Community Foundation
425.264.0516

Renton Magazine
425.271.9300

Renton Museum
425.255.2330

Senior Activity Center
425.430.6633

Valley Medical Center
425.228.3450

upcoming events

The Nutcracker

DECEMBER 11-12 & 17-19

THE WHOLE FAMILY CAN ENJOY THIS HOLIDAY FAVORITE AS CLARA DANCES HER WAY THROUGH THE CHRISTMAS PARTY AND THE NUTCRACKER PRINCE BATTLES WITH THE RAT KING ON THEIR WAY TO THE MAGICAL KINGDOM OF THE SUGAR PLUM FAIRY.

Saturday and Sunday,
Dec. 11 & 12, 1:30 & 7:30 p.m.
Auburn Performing Arts Center
700 E. Main St. Auburn

Friday, Dec. 17, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 18, 1:30 & 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 19, 1:30 p.m.
IKEA Performing Arts Center
400 S. Second St. Renton

Admission: \$29/\$18
seniors/\$13 students
425-228-6800
www.evergreencityballet.org



DECEMBER 5 K9 Candy Cane 5K FUN RUN & WALK

Runners and walkers can participate with or without their dogs. The course is flat and on the paved Cedar River Trail. A portion of the race fee supports the Cedar River Dog Park. Following the race, racers and their pets can have free pictures taken with Santa, provided by Steamboat Productions, L.L.C., and complimentary refreshments. Participants are invited to bring a can of pet food to be donated to the Renton Food Bank to help pets in need.

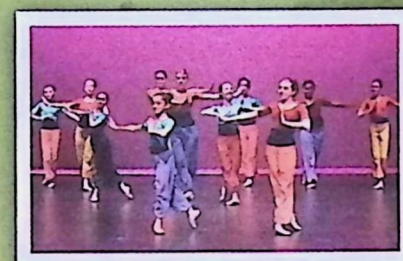
Sunday, 8-10:15 a.m.
Renton Community Center
1717 Maple Valley Highway S.E.
Admission: preregistration \$20 (no shirt)/\$25 (with shirt), day of race Additional \$10
425-430-6700
www.rentonwa.gov



December 10-18 SANTA'S HOUSE

Families have an opportunity to visit Santa and his helpers in the Piazza downtown. The Downtown Events Committee hosts the Santa's House, which includes a free downloadable picture of the visit. Sponsored by downtown businesses.

Fridays 5-7 p.m., Saturdays 1-4 p.m.
Piazza
S. 3rd Street between Burnett and Main Ave. S.
425-255-6078
happydelusions@yahoo.com



December 11 ALADDIN'S Lamp

This Middle Eastern folktale of a poor boy in love with a princess, takes audiences of all ages on a journey filled with magic and genies. Aladdin, his friends and the princess overcome adversity and evil to discover that true magic comes from the heart, not from a magic lamp. Performed by students of Spectrum Dance Theater, choreography by Spectrum Dance Theater faculty, adaptation by Bob Gribas.

Saturday, 12 & 3 p.m.
IKEA Performing Arts Center
400 S. Second St.
Admission: \$12 presale/\$14 at the door
206-325-4161
www.brownpapertickets.com



DECEMBER 4

Downtown Renton HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES

Roasted chestnuts and Dickens carolers will join strollers in the downtown retail area from 3-5 p.m., leading up to the annual tree lighting at 5 p.m. with music and refreshments. Sponsored by downtown businesses and Piazza Renton

Saturday, 3-7 p.m.
S. 3rd Street between
Burnett and Main Aves S.

425-255-6078
Admission: Free
www.PiazzaRenton.com
www.rentonwa.gov



December 9 Renton Chamber ANNUAL AUCTION

Food and libations will be served as auctioneer John Curley will sell items to fill out holiday gift-giving lists. This year the Paddle Auction will benefit the Renton Clothes Bank.

Thursday, 5-9 p.m.
The Tea Palace Restaurant
2828 Sunset Lane N.E.

Admission: \$60
425-226-4560
www.goRenton.com



December 12 Renton Youth Symphony ORCHESTRA

Talented young musicians will perform unabridged classical compositions reminiscent of the season.

Sunday, 3 p.m.
Carco Theatre
1717 S.E. Maple Valley Highway

Admission:
\$10/\$7 student
& seniors
Tickets available
at the Renton
Community Center
or at the door.

December 18 THE POLAR EXPRESS

Blue Dog Dance presents its second annual performance, an original production of this contemporary holiday story.

Carco Theatre | 1717 S.E. Maple Valley Highway
Saturday, 1 & 4 p.m. | www.bluedogdance.com | Admission: \$10



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Renton Civic Theatre
507 S. 3rd St.
Thursdays, 7:30 p.m.;
Fridays & Saturdays, 8 p.m.;
Sundays 2 p.m.
425-226-5529
Admission: \$25/\$20 senior
and student

CLAM LIGHTS & ARGOSY CHRISTMAS SHIP



December 3

The 17th annual holiday event
begins with entertainment at 6:30
p.m., followed by the official
lighting of the "Clam Lights" at
7:15 p.m. At 7:30 p.m., the
parade of lighted boats arrives at
the Rainier Yacht Club. From 8 to
8:20 p.m. the Argosy Christmas
Ship features entertainment by a
local choir.

Friday, 6:30 - 8:20 p.m.
Gene Coulon Park
1201 Lake Washington Blvd. N.
425-430-6700 / rentonwa.gov
Admission: free



save the date



January 1

POLAR BEAR DIP

Saturday, 11 a.m.
Gene Coulon Memorial
Beach Park
1201 Lake Washington Blvd. N.
Admission: Free

You can start the new year with a quick dip into the icy waters of Lake Washington at the Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park. This annual event is growing to be a local tradition. No registration is necessary. A lifeguard will be on duty. Call 425-430-6700.

calendar of events



HOLIDAY PERFORMANCES

Nutcracker Ballet

Dec. 3-5, Friday 7 p.m.,
Saturday 1:30 & 7 p.m., Sunday 1:30 p.m.

Ensemble Ballet Theatre presents The Nutcracker. Clara and her beloved Nutcracker will transport audience members to a magical land where toys come to life and snowflakes dance.

Ikea Performing Arts Center
400 S. Second St.

Admission: \$18/\$10 seniors & children

1-877-328-8771

www.ebtballet.org

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

It's a Holiday Party

Saturday, Dec. 4, 10 a.m.-noon

Youngsters ages 5 to 9 will make ornaments, decorate cookies, enjoy holiday music and hot chocolate.

Renton Community Center
1715 S.E. Maple Valley Highway

425-430-6700

Admission: \$20 Resident/\$24 Non resident

Hipster Craft Camp

Monday-Wednesday,
Dec. 20-22, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Ages 8 to 11

This creative camp for ages 8 to 11 will explore

several crafting techniques used in many hand-made art markets. Each student will learn the basics of screen printing and will be able to print his/her own book bag using graphics created by the instructor. Different techniques for creating refrigerator magnets, including resin, modge podge and button making, will be explored next. The final project will be making shrink plastic jewelry, especially rings and charms. Supply fee of \$25 paid to instructor.

Renton Community Center
1715 S.E. Maple Valley Highway

425-430-6700

Admission: \$75 Resident/\$90 Non resident

Winter Art Camp

Monday-Thursday, Dec. 27-30, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Youngsters ages 7 to 12 will draw, paint and do crafts including black and white tree paintings, beaded snowflakes, snowy scene landscapes, and a field trip to Seattle Art Museum's "Picasso" exhibit. Participants are asked to bring a smock or apron, lunch, snack and water bottle. All art materials provided.

North Highlands Neighborhood Center
3000 N.E. 16th St.

425-430-6700

Admission: \$182 Resident

CONCERTS

Renton Youth Symphony Orchestra

Sunday, Dec. 12, 3 p.m.

This talented group of young people will perform unabridged classical compositions reminiscent of the season.

Admission: \$10 adults, \$7 student/seniors.

Carco Theatre
1717 Maple Valley Highway S.E.

Tickets available at the Renton Community Center or at the door.

Renton High School Holiday Choir Concert

Thursday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m.

Ikea Performing Arts Center
400 S. Second St.

Information: Lizabeth Diaz, 204-3459

Admission: Free

Renton Community Concert Band

Sunday, Dec. 5, 3 p.m.

Carco Theatre
1717 Maple Valley Highway S.E.

Admission: \$10/ Student & Senior \$7

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS



Ancient Traditional Games with Alan Hirsch

Saturday, Dec. 11, 11 a.m.

Throughout history, almost every culture has played games. This presentation offers students and families the opportunity to discover and play the games of many cultures. With simple rules to guide them, children and adults explore strategy games, as well as games from every continent. Over 50 historical games and puzzles are included.

Renton Historical Museum
235 Mill Ave. S.

Admission: Free with admission to museum

425-255-2330

Caspar Babypants Presents - More Please, A Second Helping

Thursday, Dec. 16, 11 a.m.

This show, for ages 2 to 5 with adult, will feature simple songs families can sing together to reinforce concepts related to early literacy. Chris Ballew is better known as the lead singer of the Seattle-based rock and roll band, The Presidents of the United States of America. The group includes three singers, electric piano, electric guitar and percussion. Space is limited. First come will be first seated unless otherwise specified.

Fairwood Library
17009 140th Ave. S.E.

425-226-0522 / Admission: Free

LIBRARY EVENTS

Renton Library
100 Mill Ave. S.
425-226-6043

Holiday Songs Around the World

Monday, Dec. 6, 7 p.m.

All ages are welcome to discover holiday songs from Latin America, Japan and other countries, accompanied by a wonderful array of instruments including Andean bamboo flutes, the marimba, percussion and guitar.

Admission: Free

Hello House

Wednesday, Dec. 8, 10:30 a.m.

Ages 3 and older. Northwest singer-songwriter Nancy Stewart offers a guided musical tour through the home for ages 3 and older. Fun and easy ways the whole family can stay safe and go green will be presented. Topics include creating a disaster kit, preparing for an emergency and getting the whole family involved in conserving energy. Funding provided by Puget Sound Energy and the King County Library System Foundation.

Admission: Free

Talk Time

Wednesdays, Dec. 1, 8, 15, 22, 6:30-8 p.m.

Adults are invited to practice conversational English skills. It is not necessary to have attended previous sessions, and child care is not provided.

Admission: Free

Computer Class in Spanish Introduccion a el Internet Nivel 1

Saturday, Dec. 11, 2-3:30 p.m.

Aprenda términos importantes del internet, cómo navegar por la web, y cómo buscar información en la web usando un buscador. Pre-requisito: habilidad para usar el ratón.

Admission: Free

A River Runs Under It Book Club

Thursday, Dec. 16, 7-8:30 p.m.

This month's book is "The Thirteenth Tale," by Diane Setterfield.

Admission: Free



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RECYCLING

Electronics Recycling

Saturday, Dec. 11, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Liberty High School PTSA invites you to bring your recyclable computers and supplies, audio visual items, batteries, and barbecues (working or not) for free recycling. Proceeds from recycled raw materials are shared with local charities, homeless shelters, and food banks, including Seattle Children's Hospital and St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

Briarwood Market Place Parking Lot

164th & SE 128th Street

425-996-3513

info@1greenplanet.org

Admission: Free

SENIOR ACTIVITIES

Renton Senior Activity Center

211 Burnett Ave N.

425-430-6633

National Brownie Day Luncheon

Wednesday, Dec. 8, 11 a.m.

It's time to do the cakewalk, only with brownies. If your number is called, you will win a brownie with whipped cream. Everyone will get brownie bites at lunch.

Admission: \$3 donation over 60/\$6 charge under 60

Hat Day Luncheon

Wednesday, Dec. 15, 11:30 a.m.

Everyone with a hat - baseball caps, cowboy hats, stocking caps, a fedora, jungle hat, jester hat, funny, kooky, old or new - will receive a gift,



and the best hat will win a prize. Dessert to follow.

Admission: \$3 donation over 60/\$6 charge under 60

Holiday Luncheon

Wednesday, Dec. 22, 11:30 a.m.

The PacCar Carolers will perform. Tickets are available beginning Dec. 1 and must be purchased by Dec. 17.

Admission: \$3 donation over 60/\$6 charge under 60

ON STAGE

The Hazen Players present: Mystery at Whimbowly Manor

Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Dec. 2, 3, 4 & 9, 10, 11, 7 p.m.

When Lady White's diamond necklace disappears after a dinner party, a police detective is called in to find out where the prized possession has gone. The case seems simple enough to Lady White's husband and daughter, but when bumbling detective Bradley Baxter arrives and sends the household into disorder and frustration, the case becomes anything but simple.

Hazen Auditorium

1101 Hoquiam Ave. N.E.

Admission: \$6 students with ASB card, RSD Staff, "honored citizens" over 55 and military veterans; \$8 students without ASB card, Adults

435-204-4200

hazen.rentonschools.us

If you have an upcoming event you want others to know about, we want to hear from you. Please send information about your event to envents@pugetsoundpublishing.com or call us at 425-271-9300. Information must be received by the first of each month, to be considered for the following month's calendar.



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- Vini, teacher

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kirby unti

C'mon -&- Ring that Bell

BY KIRBY UNTI

We are entering the holiday season. It can be a time of great joy, generosity, and celebration. People throughout the world have developed their own customs and rituals to mark this time of the year.

One of my favorite activities of this season is to volunteer to ring the bell and accept donations on behalf of the Salvation Army. My favorite post is the downtown liquor store. The last two years it has been bitter cold for my stint, but I have stayed cozy warm, wrapped in multiple layers with my favorite hat. It comes complete with its own ear muffs. The same style hat was worn by Walter Matthau in "Grumpy Old Men."

I am entertained the whole time I am there by those who go out of their way to avoid the kettle to those who dig down deep into their pockets to come up with their spare change. By far most of the people who pass by drop something into the kettle.

My saddest experience was the guy who dropped his bottle trying to reach his change. It smashed and poured out all over the sidewalk. He was an honest guy to boot because when the man from the liquor store came out to clean it up he asked if his bag had broken.

"No, I just dropped it."

The liquor store guy said, "Too bad. If it had been the bag I could have replaced it for you."

I came real close to offering to replace it myself. I wish I would have.

One guy confronted me by asking, "Do you solicit here so that you can



PHOTO COURTESY OF KIRBY UNTI

Kirby Unti bundles up to stay warm during his bell-ringing stints for the Salvation Army.

play upon people's guilt because they are buying liquor?"

"No," I said. "We ring the bell here because it is one of the busiest places in town."

His response: "I never thought of that."

Many of the people offer a word of thanks and still others offer up a "God bless you" or "Merry Christmas."

Every now and then a scrooge will appear. Their response to my greeting of "happy holidays" sounds something like, "What's so happy about it?" You know they are having a bad day.

It isn't unusual to have others comment on how the Salvation Army helped them out when they were down on their luck, and now they want to return the favor.

If you want to add a measure of joy to your celebration of this season, I encourage you to volunteer to be a bell ringer. If your experience is anything like mine, you will be entertained the whole time you are ringing the bell, and you'll be moved by the compassion that people have for those facing hard times. It will restore your faith in humanity. And when you walk by a bell ringer, drop something in the kettle. Every dime makes a difference.

It is also real nice to get home, throw a log on the fire, and feel the tingle in your feet as you thaw out. Here is a shout out to Captain Terry Masango and the good people of the Salvation Army for the work they do 365 days of the year because they know, "Need knows no season!"

Renton Magazine columnist Kirby Unti is pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in the Renton Highlands.

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Where love goes ROUND & ROUND



BY SARAH ZUGSCHWERDT

Sometimes the heart can be hungrier than the belly.

But a warm, dry place, with even warmer people piling steaming soup, bread, salad and cake onto your plate, can fill up both.

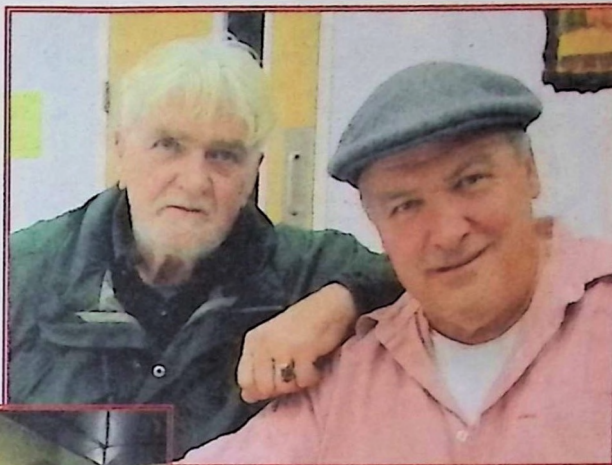
Welcome to the Renton Community Supper at the Renton Salvation Army—come in and make yourself comfortable Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. A good meal and good company is served to all who enter, free of charge, no strings attached.

"I think those thoughts in my moments when I'm alone," says supper guest David Brady-Campbell, "I think about how nice this place is. When people are kind to you, you reflect on that, and it gives you the faith that people are good, basically good."

As a retiree, Brady-Campbell subsidized his fixed income with a part-time driving job. But after a bad reaction to some medicine, that was off the table. He began coming in mid-summer when the supper began.

A cooperative effort between the Salvation Army and area churches, the supper is the response to the realization that there was no regular hot dinner program in downtown Renton. Together, they decided to change that.

A team of volunteers from 12 churches rotates serving and financing the supper, while the Salvation Army's branch of social services provides one full-time employee to plan, shop and cook the meal. Come the new year, they hope to add Tuesday and Thursday suppers as well.



RENTON MAGAZINE / SARAH ZUGSCHWERDT
Above, Community supper guests David Brady-Campbell, right, and R.J. Orth, left, enjoy conversation after their meal. Both men have come regularly since the supper began last summer.

Left, A volunteer stirs and smells the simmering soup at the Salvation Army's kitchen on the corner of Tobin and Williams in downtown Renton.

For information about attending, volunteering for or donating to the supper, visit its website, www.rentoncommunitysupper.com, and fill out the volunteer form or donate online. The Salvation Army is located at 720 South Tobin Street, Renton, WA 98057, phone 425-255-5969.

For volunteers, serving supper is just as meaningful as eating it is for guests.

"It's just, it's hard times, it's hard on everybody and some people didn't have a lot to begin with and they've lost everything," relates Diana Otonicar, one of the night's volunteers from Fairwood Church, "So I have a heart for people like that, they're still trying, they're struggling."

Lori Poc volunteers to let people know that "just because maybe [they] don't have a home or don't have money doesn't mean that they're not a very important part of our lives as a society. That, I think, makes me feel really good—I like that."

Retiree R.J. Orth certainly appreciates, and can't get away from, all the help.

"I went to the [Salvation Army] food bank up there by the airport and they said, 'Here's a loaf of bread,' and I said 'Thank you very much,'" he explains. Orth tried to go home then, but passed the Salvation Army thrift store's 50 percent off sale, and stopped to get a shirt for pennies on the dollar. Coming home, he saw the sign for the supper.

"My goodness you've got me going around in a triangle ... and now you're going to give me free dinner!" he jokes.

Orth has been to supper about 50 times, he estimates, and now escorts several ladies from nearby retirement communities there, too. When he does have money, Orth writes his own check to the Salvation Army because, like he told Captain Terry Masango, "You guys are doing more than anybody else. That's why we're here, and that's why we're going to donate to you. Kind of like love goes around, like a boomerang, it comes back to you."

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Camp Fire USA™

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BY SARAH ZUGSCHWERDT

Would you call getting wet and muddy while crossing rivers a good time? How about cutting vines off of an abandoned, derelict refrigerator before tipping swamp mud out and hauling it away?

For Camp Fire USA members volunteering to clean up Seattle's Dead Horse Canyon, it's the best time around.

"We plant trees and take out plants that aren't supposed to be there like ivy and [noxious] weeds," explains 12-year-old Marshall Clairmont about volunteering in the urban forest. Of course, chasing salamanders, forging their own trails and generally forgetting civilization adds to the excitement of the service activity, making it a favorite with both the Adventure (third-fifth grade) and Horizon (ninth-twelfth grade) Renton Camp Fire groups.

This picture is just what Dr. Luther and Charlotte Gulick envisioned when they started the Camp Fire Girls program in Maine in 1910. The camp fire, they decided, was the original center of community life where work, health and love converged in the people gathered around it. It was also the place where older adults taught the younger generation and prepared them to join the community as caring and confident adults.



RENTON MAGAZINE / SARAH ZUGSCHWERDT

Members or sisters? This Campfire USA group has been together for four years and operates more like a family than a group—unless it's a group of sisters. All are working towards their Wohelo award, the highest honor in Campfire USA.

For information about Camp Fire USA, visit www.campfire-usa.org and follow the links to the Central Puget Sound Council where there's an online interest form. Mary Olsen can also be reached by phone at 206.826.8945.

At each level, the program leads youth on five different "trails" that extend from and lead to the camp fire, like the trail to creativity and the trail to the future. All curriculum activities use research-based educational standards and are customized to a group's interests. In 1975, the program became co-ed. Years following have added Saturday Club, a program for children with disabilities, day camps in addition to long-standing resident camps, and some childcare.

To build leadership, members take turns leading the activities within the group. As students mature, they gradually assume more of the responsibilities of the adult leader.

"We actually have kids graduating from our programs who can lead events for two or three hundred people and do all the planning," says Mary Olsen, director of Camp Fire's Group and Older Youth Programs, Central Puget Sound Council.

Hazen High School junior Maddie Martin says she believes practicing volunteerism and leadership for 11 years in Camp Fire has made her "definitely more self-starting." At Newcastle's Arbor Day celebration, Maddie and

her friends came across a littered hillside. Instead of passing it by, she said – and meant – "We'll have to come back."

Renton High School sophomore Brianna Stepper has found her stride in Camp Fire, starting from the first grade. That year was a bit rough when her young schoolmates decided she didn't fit in. But through Camp Fire's self-discovery and leadership training, she learned that competitions like "who has the prettiest hair" don't matter much and that standing out is actually more important than fitting in.

Now, as part of her Horizon level Wohelo award work (the highest award in Camp Fire, standing for work, health and love), she's planning a project to share this definition of "cool" with the next generation of Camp Fire kids as a camp counselor. But, she admits, even that idea overwhelmed her at first. Yet gradually, watching Camp Fire members ahead of her and taking one trail step at a time, "I realized, 'No! I'm born for this, I can do this, I would love to do this!'" she says adamantly.

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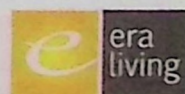
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EN POINTE, ON STAGE,



RENTON MAGAZINE
SARAH ZUGSCHWERDT

Below, Elsa Davidson has studied ballet for 14 years, starting at just age 3. This year Davidson will play the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy in the Evergreen City Ballet's production of "The Nutcracker."

IT'S THE

BY SARAH ZUGSCHWERDT

*T*heater lights dim and the heavy brocade curtain draws open as the distinctive music of "The Nutcracker" begins.

On stage, it's Christmas Eve in the Stahlbaum home, and time to celebrate with friends under the festive shadow of the Christmas tree. Everything is exciting, but especially the nutcracker toy given by godfather Drosselmeyer to Clara, one of the Stahlbaum children. After the party, when the house is dark, Clara sneaks out of bed to the tree and falls asleep with her beloved nutcracker cradled in her arms, only to dream the wildest and sweetest of dreams.

Perhaps you know the story. But like the holiday it symbolizes, the ballet's mystery is reborn every December. This season, Renton's Evergreen City Ballet (ECB) will perform the holiday favorite both in Renton and Auburn.

The goal of at least one performer is "really thinking about the storyline of the ballet, and what that character does within the story and trying to bring that out in your dancing," says soft spoken Elsa Davidson, 17, who's cast as the Sugar Plum Fairy. "I always think about what the little kids think of her and how much all the little girls love seeing her dance and how iconic that is to them, so I'm always excited to dance it for them."

Elsa moved from Kentucky to Issaquah two years ago, and is homeschooled along with her seven brothers and sisters. As part of ECB's performance division, she takes rigorous classes five days a week, and is eligible for major roles like the Sugar Plum Fairy alongside ECB's company members. The soon-to-be graduate hopes to turn professional and is looking into options both locally and nationally.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FELICIA WARD

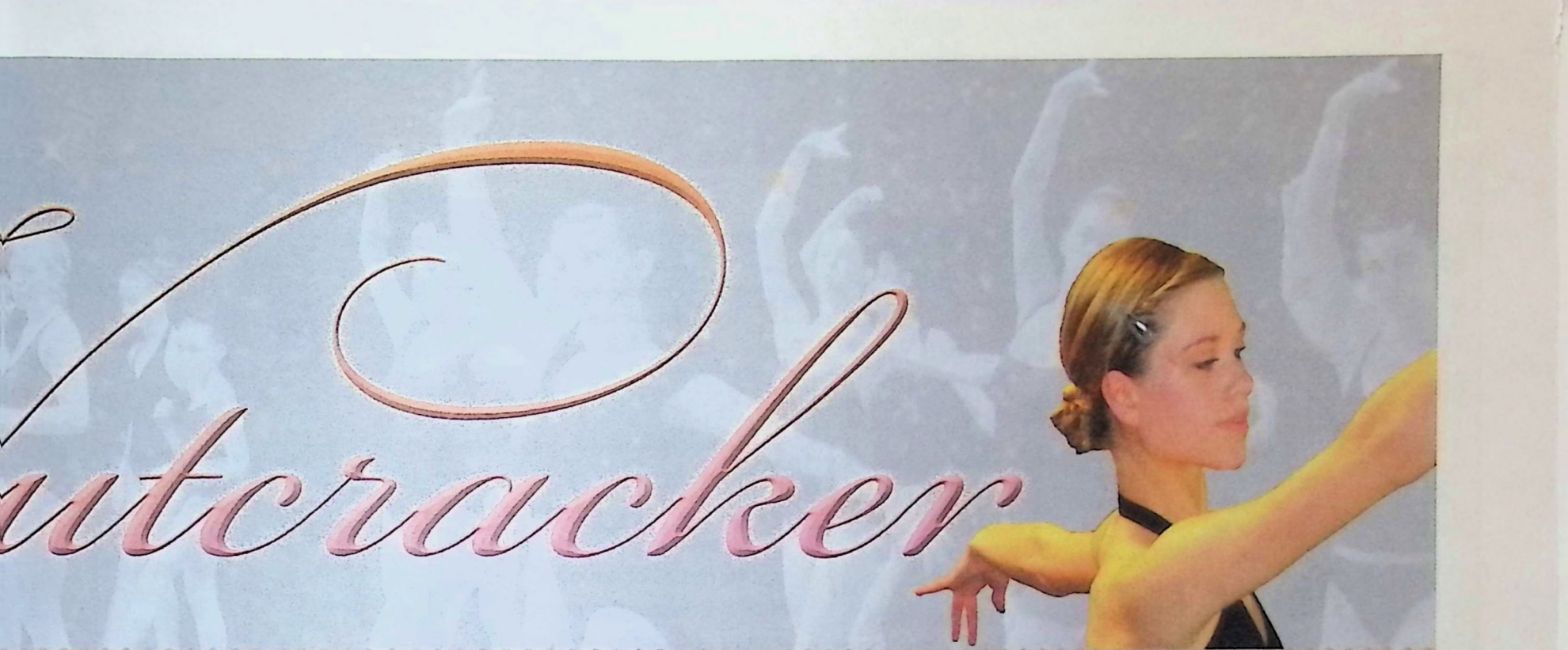
Left, Morgan Ward, 16, danced in the Russian Corps in last year's production of "The Nutcracker."



NUTCRACKER BASICS

Nutcracker ticket prices are \$29 for adults, \$18 for seniors, and \$13 for children. Tickets are available online at www.evergreencityballet.org, by phone at 800-899-9260, in person at ECB's studio, or at the show. All performances are open seating; doors open a half-hour before performance time. Dates are: Saturday, Dec. 11 - 1:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, Dec. 12 - 1:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. at the Auburn Performing Arts Center; Friday, Dec. 17 - 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 18 - 1:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 19 - 1:30 pm, at the Renton IKEA Performing Arts Center. Parking is free at both venues.

For the month of December, ticket holders can take advantage of a special offer by Salty's restaurant in Redondo. Show your ticket or ticket stub and receive \$5 off brunch, or Salty's three-course Prix Fixe dinner for \$30.



Nutcracker

EDUCATING FOR LIFE

ECB's artistic director Kevin Kaiser, himself a professional dancer with the Pacific Northwest Ballet for 14 years, has urged Elsa to consider her options nationally, the same way he encourages students to participate in summer programs throughout the country. Many of his past students have gone on to professional dance careers with well-known organizations, including the Pacific Northwest Ballet, "and we're very proud of that," says Kaiser.

"We are an educational organization for the most part, and that is to teach our youth about this art form, and then also to bring them up to appreciate it through the rest of their lives and use whatever they learn from this art form in whatever career they decide to have," explains Kaiser. "But if they do want to become professional dancers, they certainly have the education behind them to do so."

For her own part, Elsa can't get away from that one moment, after she's gifted the audience with her dancing, and they thank her with an eruption of applause.

"It's wonderful—it's the best feeling ever. I don't think anything else could be like it," she smilingly admits.

On the stage with Elsa are over 60 other dancers, all hand-picked by Kaiser for their roles. One of them is Morgan Ward, 16, of Renton, who also is a transplant,

having moved here from Dallas just two years ago.

Morgan has high-functioning autism, creating challenges in motor coordination and language skills. Yet, the nine-year dancing veteran thrives in ballet, and even more so at ECB.

"She has to work incredibly hard to get the brain to move with her feet," explains Felicia Ward, Morgan's mom, "My goal is that she will continue to do it for as long as she likes it and enjoys it. She loves it; it's kind of a therapeutic."

Ward researched ballet schools when planning the family's move, and couldn't be happier with her decision.

"I've just been so impressed with the group and all the girls up there," she expresses, "They've been nothing but kind and nice to her here. And this is such an incredible place and I think it's because of Kevin and Andi [Bryndza, ballet mistress] and the tone set with it."

GOING EN POINTE

One example Ward mentions is allowing Morgan to go "en pointe," to use the special shoes a ballet dancer wears to stand on the very tips of her toes. After considering it, Kaiser said simply, "Why not?" and Morgan got her very first pair of "toe shoes" just over a year ago.

Morgan herself is quick to mention, "Did you know I am going to be dancing en pointe this year on

stage?"

"It's the honest truth," says Ward about the decision, "I don't think I've conveyed it to them enough, but to put her en pointe and take that chance with her boosted her self-confidence like you wouldn't believe. And for her to be actually be able to perform this role in *The Nutcracker* en pointe and wear a tutu—it's just that this is such a big deal."

"The thing I love about Morgan is she has a real challenge," Kaiser relates, "and she's just a sweetheart; she'll just talk to you."

Morgan also bowls on Saturday mornings and enjoys working with animals, including her dog. But around the house, her dance moves grace hallways and kitchen floors, a token of the magic "*The Nutcracker*" brings wherever it goes.

Come holiday time, Kaiser really wants "to let people know that they have a very high quality ballet company here, dance company here, without having to go to Seattle, and pay for parking and pay for dinners and all those different things."

Considering the economy, Kaiser made an important decision for this year.

"I changed the ticket pricing for this season in order to allow more people to come in and enjoy the holiday festivities," because, says Kaiser, "that's really what *Nutcracker* is all about, is to bring them into the holiday spirit."

Make-ahead Recipes for holiday brunch

During the madness and rush of the holiday season, preparing something special that can be made ahead and served to family and guests Christmas morning is a real plus. Here are several wonderful recipes that my family and friends have enjoyed in years past.

You can order cooked duck breasts online at Maple Leaf Farms (www.mapleleaf-farms.com) or find frozen ducks at local specialty stores. To cook raw duck breasts I have found the easiest method is to place them in a steamer basket in a saucepan over medium high heat. Cook them for about 8 to 10 minutes over gently boiling water. Cool and refrigerate until using.

If you wish, this recipe is great topped with a poached egg and hollandaise sauce. All of the prep can be done ahead, placed in zip

lock bags and refrigerated. When ready to serve, simply melt the butter, toss in the onion and garlic to brown, then add the rest of the ingredients and cook until crispy and brown. The entire recipe can also be assembled a day or two before and reheated in a large skillet or baked in the oven. Feel free to adjust amounts of the duck, potatoes or variety and amounts of the peppers.

Duck Hash

Serves 4 - 6

you will need

3 tbs. butter
1 medium onion, chopped
4 cooked duck breasts, cut into half-inch chunks

1 clove garlic, minced
3 cups diced cooked potatoes (Yukon Gold are nice - you can leave skins on)
1 red, orange, yellow or green pepper, seeded and diced

1 cup quartered fresh mushrooms
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
2 tbs. minced parsley or chives
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Melt butter in a large skillet and sauté onion and garlic over medium high heat until softened and beginning to brown. Add duck, potatoes and peppers and cook until potatoes are crispy and peppers are beginning to soften. Stir in mushrooms and seasonings.



CHRISTIE KATONA

Christie Katona is the owner of Christie's Catering Inc. in Renton. She attended the Cordon Bleu in London, has authored many cookbooks, taught cooking classes for many years and worked as a restaurant consultant. More recipes and suggestions can be found at www.Christies-Catering.com.



Apricot Bread Pudding with Amaretto Sauce

Serves 8 - 12

Make this ahead and refrigerate, then rewarm in the microwave or oven prior to serving. This has a wonderful balance of sweet, tangy and crunch. It would be nice served with scrambled eggs and ham.

bread pudding

1 pound egg bread, cut
into cubes
3 cups whole milk
1 cup heavy cream
3 eggs, beaten
2 cups sugar
2 tbs. almond extract
1 cup dried apricots,
coarsely chopped
1 cup slivered almonds
1 cup golden raisins

directions

Combine milk and cream in a large bowl, add bread and soak until softened. Stir in remaining ingredients and pour into a shallow glass casserole, approximately 9 x 13 inches. Preheat oven to 350. In a large roasting pan, place casserole and fill to midway with boiling water. (The French call this a "bain marie"). Bake for 50 to 60 minutes or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean.

amarretto sauce

2 cups powdered sugar 1/2 cup Amaretto liqueur
1 cup butter 2 eggs, beaten

directions - In a small sauce pan, melt butter, stir in remaining ingredients and cook until thickened and begins to boil. May be made ahead and refrigerated. Reheat in the microwave. To serve, spoon bread pudding into serving dishes and top with sauce.



Butter Pecan Muffins

Serves 8 - 12

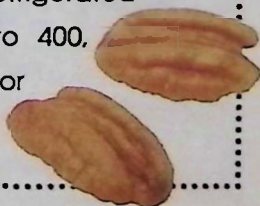
This recipe is different in that you don't use paper muffin liners and you make the batter the day before. Just preheat the oven and pop them in for fresh muffins in a snap.

you will need

1/2 cup butter
1 cup brown
sugar
1 egg
1 cup milk
1/2 tsp. baking
soda
1 tsp. vanilla
2 cups flour
1/2 cup chopped
pecans

directions

Grease well a 12 cup muffin tin. Combine butter, sugar, egg and milk until smooth. I use the steel knife of a food processor. Add remaining ingredients and process briefly to combine. Spoon into prepared pan. Can be covered with plastic wrap and refrigerated overnight. Preheat oven to 400, bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until puffed and golden.



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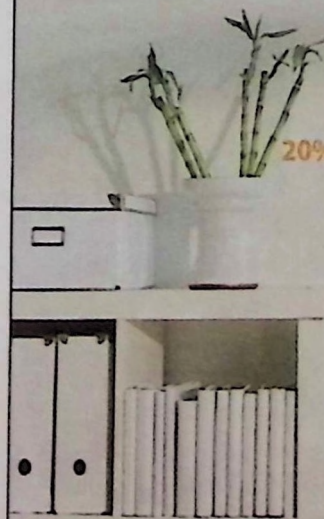
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pet care



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Dogs and cats are at the shelter, awaiting new homes and families.

Adopting a shelter pet

BY DR. KATHLEEN CONNELL

You and your family can welcome a great pet into your home by adopting a shelter animal. Many animals are in need of a good home, and shelters do a lot of the work for you. They will assess the animal's temperament and note any behavioral problems. They will also provide the necessary vaccines, administer de-worming medication, and the dog or cat will be spayed or neutered.

If these procedures have not been done, ask if they will be done before you adopt the pet and take it home. Shelters demand the animal be sterilized or that you show proof that it is done at the appropriate age.

Ask about the animal's previous living situation and medical history. If it was given up, why did the previous family relinquish it? Shelter staff may not know, but carefully decide if you want an animal if you find out about some questionable history or serious health concerns. If the adoption does not work out, does your shelter have a return policy?

How has the pet behaved while at the shelter? Ask about any behavioral issues, such as barking, aggression, biting, digging, chewing or not being socialized. Take on behavior

problems only if you have the time and energy to give special attention and training. The shelter may provide follow-up services or can recommend people who provide obedience training or work with behavioral problems.

During your visit, stop, look and listen. Do you hear coughing? Barking or growling? Is your potential pet cowering in a corner or friendly and interested in finding out more about you? Avoid an animal that looks and acts sick, with discharge from the eyes or nose, dull eyes, or lacks energy.

Find out the animal's age, breed and gender. Are there any current medical problems such as cancer or diabetes? Is the animal on any medications?

Assess the animal to ensure it will get along well with children and other family pets. Before you adopt is the time to find out if your potential pet doesn't like kids or doesn't get along with other animals.

Look for a pet that fits your lifestyle and living situation. Large-breed dogs need more room, so maybe a smaller pet is a better fit for that tiny apartment. Whether you are looking for a more sedate lap dog or a very active outdoor companion, choose appropriately.

If you do not already have a veterinarian, ask for recommendations. You will need a veterinarian for routine and emergency health care for your new pet.

Dr. Kathy Connell owns Foxglove Consulting in Olympia.

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around
the garden

Deck the halls, but...

BY ELAINE ANDERSON

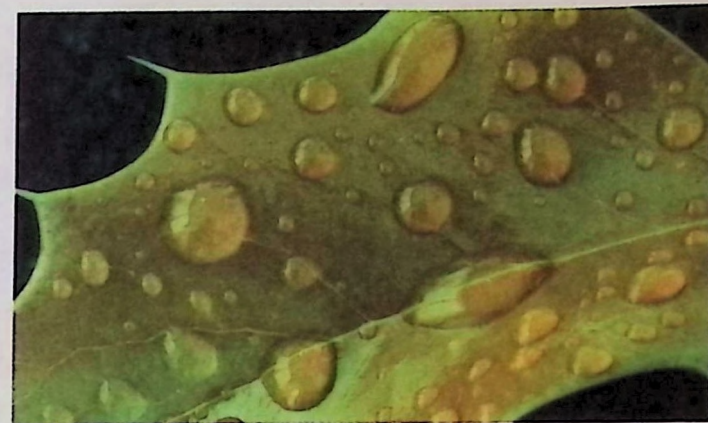
When you deck your halls with boughs of holly, you are following a holiday tradition that goes back thousands of years. The practice of using holly in Christmas decorations likely began with the early Romans, although, of course, there was no Christmas then. The mid-winter festival was Saturnalia, and holly was exchanged as a token of friendship and good will.

Druids believed the holly tree to be sacred, a tree with magical powers. Cutting one down meant the end of good fortune. Holly has been used to ward off evil and mad dogs. The Welsh did not decorate with holly because they believed it caused quarrels. They also believed if a branch from a female plant was brought

into the home, it meant the wife would rule the roost during the coming year. Likewise, if a branch from a male plant was used to decorate, it meant the male would reign. You can see how a quarrel might begin right there as spouses struggled in the doorway to be the first to get their holly branches into the room.

Decorative holly was put to more friendly uses as well. It gave fairies and elves a place to hide while they went about doing good deeds in the household. The leaves were used for medicinal purposes (but not the berries, which are toxic to humans), and the wood is hard and excellent for carving. Fabergé used it to make cases for his jeweled eggs.

Holly's dark, glossy leaves and bright red berries are synonymous with holiday cheer. But, there's a less cheerful side to consider. English holly, *Ilex aquifolium*, is grown as an ornamental here in the Northwest, but it is



considered invasive and is classified as a "Weed of Concern" in King County. However, it is still legal to buy and sell.

You don't have to forego the many attributes of holly as a landscape tree. According to Sasha Shaw with the King County Noxious Weed Control Program, the following are non-invasive substitutes for English holly: Meserve hybrid hollies, *Ilex x meservae*, and the English holly cultivars "Ferox Argenta" and "Gold Coast." Others are listed in the county's "Garden Wise" booklet, available for downloading.

Enjoy your holiday holly, but if you are going to grow your own, substitute one of English holly's non-invasive relatives.

Elaine Anderson is the Washington State University Extension coordinator for the King County Master Gardener Program. The program, funded by WSU and the Master Gardener Foundation of King County, provides free, environmentally friendly gardening advice to home gardeners. For answers to your questions about holly and other gardening topics, call the Master Gardener Phone Clinic at 206-543-0943.



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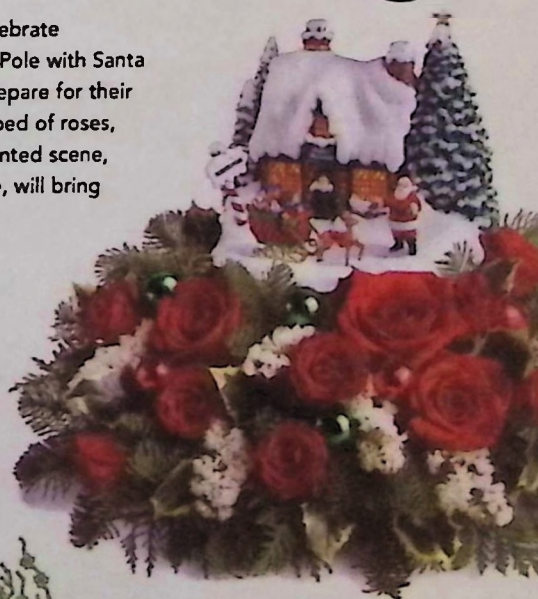
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BY SARAH ZUGSCHWERDT



how your garden grows is very dependent on what goes in it—and we're not just talking about seeds.

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Compost makes all the difference, though depending on your affection for dirt, you may not completely understand why. Cedar Grove Composting, a Puget Sound company with plants (the factory kind) in Everett and Maple Valley, leads not just the region, but the nation in both composting technology, sheer volume (the Maple Valley plant alone is permitted for 195,000 in-bound tons per year of green waste, including all green waste in Renton, Kent and surrounding areas), and some might argue, quality of product.

Susan Thoman, Cedar Grove's business development director, explains that it all begins with in-bound organic material they call "feedstock," gathered both from residential and commercial properties. Trucks arrive at Cedar Grove and "weigh in and tip in," dumping the feedstock into a giant grinder.

The ground feedstock is spread onto large

"pads" that lie atop trenches and then covered with special fabric to create a biosphere, allowing high temperatures while keeping odors and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's) contained. Much like baking a cake, the feedstock is heated and aerated for seven to eight weeks before being screened for inert material, and finally, pronounced done.

Or ready. In late winter, the plant is filled with bags almost to overflowing.

"You'll literally see bags everywhere," says Thoman, "then it'll be like a giant straw cane

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RENTON MAGAZINE / SARAH ZUGSCHWERT

Cedar Grove Compost's Susan Thoman shows off the company's signature product, with a background sign that says it all: Garden MORE, work less.

and sucked them all out, by ... mid-April because there'll be such a demand for the bags. So we're like squirrels."

The bagged products include straight compost, but also topsoil, potting soil, and Booster Blend, a mix of compost and composted dairy manure that provides extra nitrogen that plants like roses need.

All bagged products are also available in bulk, alongside two other products too heavy for bags: Veggie Garden Mix, a mix of sand, sandy loam and compost, and Northwest Garden Mulch, a mix of bark and compost that both retains its dark color and adds nutrients (bark-only can strip nutrients from soil). Product descriptions, gardening tips, a "compost calculator," and a retailer-finder feature are available at Cedar Grove's website, www.cedar-grove.com. Delivery is also available.

Some gardeners have made an annual springtime pilgrimage to Cedar



RENTON MAGAZINE / JAMES BAVENDAM

Incoming trucks deliver waste to the receiving building (2) across from the main sales office (1). The waste is ground up (3) and depending on its composition may take one of two paths. Household food and yard waste continue to rectangular large piles (4) for their first stage of composting, then a large round area (5) for second and third stages. Waste that includes commercial food waste starts under cover (6) and ends uncovered. All compost continues for screening and sorting (7), then to large piles (8) for storage until sale.

Grove for 20 years, lured by the size and strength of their carrots, cabbage and corn later on in summer, says Thoman.

"Compost is a natural amendment that really mimics nature," explains Thoman. "So many people think of gardening as chemistry, but it's really chemistry and biology combined. So what compost does is, it puts in the microbes that biologically are meant to be there."

Microbes are tiny organisms in the soil that break down organic material, like a leaf or twig and allow the plant to access the nutrients they offer. The process would happen naturally if dying plants were left to decompose for a matter of months or years, but ploughed gardens and planting beds don't have the luxury.

Other compost benefits are numerous, including lower water usage,

reduced landfill waste (plus the fuel used to deliver it), lower carbon, and the sustainability found in completing the recycling cycle. And it feels good to convert almost 70 percent of your garbage waste, which is what some local restaurants have found, says Thoman.

But I could just put on a chemical feed, the skeptic might think. Thoman has something to say about that, too:

"We always joke, when you give your plants chemicals, it's like giving them crack. You're like turning them into junkies ... they're just overwhelmed with this chemical and then they need more and more and more."

But don't fear; nature always has a comeback.

"Compost is kind of like rehab," Thoman says, "[It] gives back the natural state of the soil."

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renton history



COURTESY OF RENTON HISTORY MUSEUM

The 30 eighth-grade graduates in 1907. Only four of these students made it to the first Renton High graduating class.

When high school was new

BY ELIZABETH P. STEWART

Renton High School is celebrating its centennial school year, a landmark event. In 1910–1911 the very concept of high school was fairly new. Many families, accustomed to sending their youth out to work after eighth grade, had to be won over to the very idea that further education was a key to success. Yet, with a new building under construction, students and teachers had high hopes for its future.

In 1907 thirty students entered what would become the first graduating class of Renton High School. Class secretary Allie Grady remembered that “there had been many [high school] classes which had preceded us but none which had completed the four-year course.” These freshmen spent their year in the eighth grade room at Central School, taught by the eighth grade teacher.

“No debating societies were organized,” Miss Grady reported, “nor did we Freshies engage in athletic sports to speak of.” By their sophomore year, only eight students were left. The other twenty-two had gone to

work, other schools, or had taken on other family responsibilities.

By 1909 the class was half as big again; only four students remained. The first high school graduating class—the Class of 1911—consisted of those four students: class president Vane N. Marlowe, class secretary Allie Grady, treasurer Susie A. Wood, and poor William X. Norton, the only senior without a title. Class members began to develop a high school identity, choosing their own colors (lavender and cream) and wearing class pins. Students formed a literary society and a football team. By their senior year, they shared a classroom only with juniors.

“The separation was a happy one for us,” Miss Grady remembered, “and we resolved to ... make the last year the most successful of all our school years.”

In the foreword to the 1911 yearbook, school superintendent V. W. Talbot observed that “practically speaking, the present form of school has only been organized two years; and when we consider what has been accomplished in that short space, it gives us precedent to anticipate a glorious future.”

Although the next year’s graduating class consisted of three girls, enrollment for the entire school had grown to 70, and Renton High School was up and running.

did you know that...

...the Melrose Grill (formerly “Melrose Hotel”) was started by a veteran of the Klondike Gold Rush? Ben Atkinson made his fortune panning for gold and provisioning other miners in the Klondike. He brought his earnings back to Renton and founded a 35-room hotel.

...the first hotel in Renton was operated by a woman? Mary C. Kline founded the Central Hotel sometime around 1890 after the death of her husband, Abraham, a Renton jeweler.

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The Puget Sound Region is a land of readers! That was the conclusion of a recent survey funded by the King County Library Foundation. The survey sought to find the place reading has in the lives of those who live in King County.

Other findings include:

- The vast majority of people in King County think reading is a great thing and that everybody ought to do it.
- They think this even if they don't read themselves.
- They don't identify themselves as readers, even if they read a lot.
- The most common reason people don't read as much as they'd like is lack of time.

After receiving the results of the survey, the KCLS Foundation initiated a three-year campaign, "Take Time to Read." One of the major components of the campaign is the Quick Reads program, which is being launched in 20 communities in the KCLS service area.

Since time is seen as the biggest barrier to reading, this part of the campaign will provide access to materials they can be read quickly via the Quick Reads Shelf. These materials will be made available in places where people may find themselves with a few minutes to wait, and perhaps read

through a branded selection of materials on an easily identifiable shelf. At some of the locations, a comfortable reading chair will be placed in conjunction with the Quick Reads Shelf to invite people to take the time to read.

Renton has been chosen as one of the libraries to participate in the program. The downtown Renton library offers a comfortable chair adjacent to the Quick Read materials, says Aaron Oesting, Renton managing librarian. In addition, materials have been placed at Group Health Medical Center in Renton, and Valley Medical Center.

All of the KCLS libraries will also be participating in Take Time to Read by distributing Quick Read booklists and Take Time to Read brochures, and by distributing Gift of Time gift cards. These cards, which look much like other gift cards, promise a gift of time to the recipient.

Join in the fun and pick up a gift card at the library. And steal a few minutes in your day to read – a book, an essay, a short story or a magazine like the one you are enjoying now. Reading enriches our lives!


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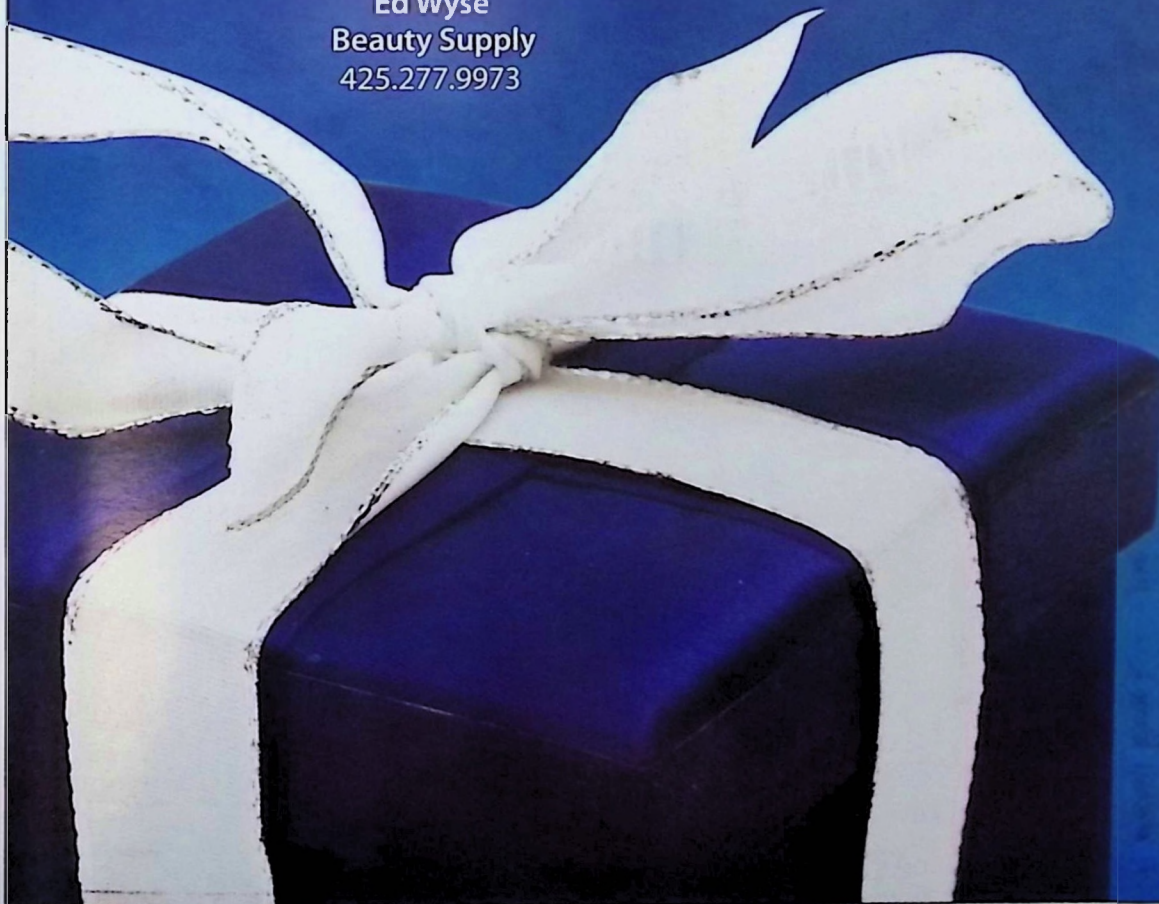
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