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WHAT'S INSIDE THIS WEEK?

- Easter egg hunt at Ives Park Page 2
- Gay hate crime sentencing Page 3
- Letters to the editor Page 5
- High school sports Page 11

New Field Guide to the Laguna
Page 13



SONOMA WEST TIMES & NEWS

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Hail Mary, full of organizational grace

Sebastopol City Clerk Mary Gourley wins City Clerk of the Year for California

By Laura Hagar Rush
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Sebastopol City Clerk and Assistant City Manager Mary Gourley has been named the City Clerk of the Year for the state of California. The award, bestowed by the 1,087-member City Clerks Association of California, was presented to Gourley at the organization's annual conference in Southern California on April 4.



MARY GOURLEY

Gourley was born in Petaluma, the last of nine children. She grew up in Cotati and went to work at the age of 17 as an office clerk in the Presidio, which was still a military base at the time. She never went to college, but credits her early years working as a civilian for the military for showing her the route she would ultimately take to

professional success: training, training, training.

"In the military, they're very precise about how they want things," she said. "They sent me to a lot of training."

When the Presidio closed down, Gourley found a job in Sebastopol as clerk to the planning director and superintendent of public works. Three years later, she was promoted to planning technician, and since 2006, has been the city clerk for the city of Sebastopol. In 2016, she was promoted to the position of Assistant City Manager/City Clerk.

"By the time, I got to Sebastopol, I had two children and had put college on the back burner, and I realized, 'You know, I can do this without a degree' and so I did, just learning day by day" — and devoting hours of her time to continual improvement through training at conferences and through online learning. She estimates that she has spent literally "thousands of hours" in training.

"I love learning new things," Gourley said, "and finding new ways to do things better."

Her description of her career path would be good advice for anyone starting out in the work world:

"I learned everything I could about the position, created more responsibilities, took on more work, learned more about the city and worked my way up," she said. "I think it's all about creating your position, creating the atmosphere you want around yourself and doing what you can do in your position to make your job a happier place."

In most cities, Gourley's job would be done by two people — a city clerk and an assistant city manager — but she juggles the tasks of two fulltime jobs with grace.

As the city clerk, Gourley manages local elections, records and publishes local legislation, responds to Public Records Act requests and

See Mary Page 8

Perfect day for Apple Blossom



Photo Sarah Bradbury

ON PARADE — Parade participants rode, marched, danced and skated their way down Main Street for this year's Apple Blossom Parade. Here a member of Sonoma County Roller Derby struts her stuff. See a full page of Apple Blossom Parade images on page 8.

Town rallies to save the Occidental Farmers Market

By Laura Hagar Rush
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A group of local businesses and community members in Occidental is working together to bring back the Occidental Farmers Market.

They are partnering with the Sonoma County Certified Farmers' Market Association, which operates farmers markets in Sebastopol, Cotati and Sonoma, with the purpose of reopening the beloved Occidental market in June.

The new organization, which calls itself Occidental Community Farmers Market, is not related to the group that previously ran the market — and in fact, relations between the two are strained. The board of the new group includes Osmosis Day Spa owner Michael Stusser (president), Chris Martin (vice president), Andy Henderson (treasurer), Katy Mamen (secretary) and Andros Howes (events).

"We have put together an enthusiastic and capable board to work to find a way to reopen the market," said Stusser. "We have a representative from the local businesses, a farmer, someone from Occidental Arts and Ecology, a musician and a long-term Occidental family person. We are determined to get the market open, and right now we are working through the permitting requirements, setting up a new website and finding vendors."

According to Stusser, the group formed in response to the outpouring of concern in the wake of

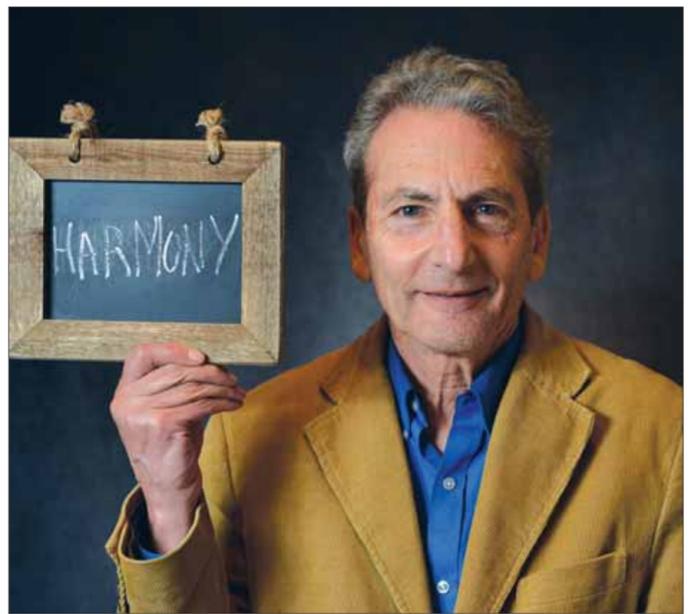


Photo provided

STARTING ANEW — After the acrimony that overtook the town of Occidental in the aftermath of the announcement of the closing of the farmers market, Michael Stusser, above, got together with others in Occidental to bring the market back to town.

the recent announcement to close the market.

"Our intention is to enable local farmers and vendors to continue to sell their products in Occidental on Fridays throughout the summer season and sustain this historically

significant community gathering," Stusser said.

"This market has been an incredible catalyst for community in west county, as well as providing

See Farmers Market Page 2

Easter's on its way



Photo Kristie Franceschi

MY BUDDY THE EASTER BUNNY — Easter came early in Forestville with the annual egg hunt at Youth Park. There will be another Easter egg hunt in Sebastopol this weekend. Find out more about it on page 2.

Principal Raul Guerrero to leave Analy in June

By Laura Hagar Rush
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Raul Guerrero, who began his tenure as principal of Analy High School in June 2016, announced last week that he is leaving the West Sonoma County Union High School District to become principal at Calistoga Junior-Senior High School in Napa County. His tenure at Analy will end in June, at the end of the school year.

Guerrero worked for eight years as a vice principal at Analy before becoming principal. Before that he worked for the Santa Rosa City Schools as an assistant/vice principal at Montgomery and Elsie Allen high schools, a principal at Hilliard



Photo Laura Hagar Rush

ON SITE — Principal Raul Guerrero, right, greeted returning students on the first day of school last September.

See Guerrero Page 8