

A scenic sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange and yellow glow across the sky and reflecting on the water. In the foreground, there are numerous yellow flowers, possibly cosmos, in full bloom. A large, dark leaf is visible on the left side of the frame. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

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Editor's Corner

Every day, the sun comes up, and all the daily work it takes to keep a world from running off its rails is done, after which, the sun goes down and eventually comes up again. Then we're at it again.

Each of us is often with our head down, focusing on our own part in the scheme of things.

Sure, we see some of what others are doing, but most of it happens behind the scenes. While we're not looking, light bulbs get changed, lawns mowed, livestock fed, engines greased, floors mopped, groceries stocked, school books studied, and food prepped.

Sometimes it seems there are precious too few things to point to that could remind us that we're all in this together – something that links us, despite some of our separate personal paths.

Many Rio Vistans agree that there is one thing we all see every day that is particularly spectacular given our geography and terrain. That thing is the impressive sky above us. Despite Rio Vistans noticing it every day, neither we, nor certainly our visitors, ever get so used to it that we aren't struck in wonder at its blazing sunsets, cleaving sunrises, or its sky-wide display of floating, wind-hewn sculptures backlit in iridescent pastels of blue, orange and purple.

For this issue, we asked several Rio Vistans that work directly or indirectly with or under our sky how doing so inspires their work or play. We're also excited about some other features in this issue, including one on some of our prominent photographers (some of whose photos grace the Big Sky article as well as our cover), a look back at one of our historical landscape painters, some of the artwork being featured at a Rio Vista cannabis dispensary, the Hog August Bites festival, an appreciation of RioVision board member and long-time local advocate for the arts, Jim Pezzaglia, and a spread you won't want to miss on Rio Vista's brilliant jewelry artisans Amy Schmidt and the Birdtown Designs group of Jill Graham, Joann Hill, Lane Sennett and Cindy Stewart.

Note: We apologize for incorrectly identifying Julie Jacobs as Julie Griffin in our "Spreading Kindness One Rock at a Time" article in our last edition.

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Discover Rio Vista is a tri-annual magazine published by the RioVision Promotions and Communications team that provides information about events, activities and places of interest in and around Rio Vista. This magazine is a volunteer effort. Call RioVision at (707) 360-5244 to help!

See the *Discover Rio Vista* website at discoverriovista.com. For additional information about RioVision see riovistavision.com and facebook.com/riovistavision. RioVision is a non-profit 501(c)(3) group.

COVER: Photographer Greg Mitchell, known as "R.V. Bridgeman," captures the Delta at sunrise.

Reach for the Stars... and a Healing Crystal

Writer: Robie Williams Photographer: Jan Vick

We've asked some Rio Vistans, whose livelihoods or passions expose them directly or indirectly, literally or metaphorically to it, about the inspiration they find in that vast and perpetually stunning canopy we enjoy every day here in Rio Vista. Here are some of the responses we received.

As day turns to dusk, bright points of light appear and brighten as the night sky darkens. Looking into the clear Rio Vista night sky Zodiac constellations are out there blinking. Catch Aries, Capricornus, Taurus, Scorpious or Pisces as their stars twinkle from afar.

Astrology dates back to the 3rd millennium BC when it was used to predict celestial cycles and a search for human meaning. Horoscopes have been found on cave walls and sheets of papyrus dating back to 1700 BC in Babylonia. From Babylonia it spread to ancient Greece, the Arab nations, then to Central and Western Europe. It was once considered a scholarly study and it lead to the more scientific studies of astronomy. Many cultures have used the alignment of celestial and terrestrial events including the Hindus, Mayans and Chinese. Contemporary Western astrology is used to clarify aspects of a person's personality related to the position of heavenly bodies.



An astrological zodiac wheel.



A table displays crystals.

Lisa Stevens, proprietor of The Astrology Shop, recently moved to the Delta after living life in the big city. Born in Sacramento and recently living in Los Angeles, she enjoys our Delta sky for its clarity and ability to see the stars so clearly in comparison to large city skies. "The sky, the planets, stars and constellations all

influence your spiritual being," Lisa states.

The Astrology Shop, located at 207 Main Street, can bring you closer to understanding the meaning of the stars in your life. Remember to keep your mind open to the possibilities that you may learn on your trip into the celestial constellations.

Lisa is a 4th generation psychic who has been practicing spiritual healing for 15 years. "Astrology is the key to finding out about yourself" says Lisa.

Lisa uses many means as a spiritual healer to assist others in their journey including healing crystals and gemstones. For centuries gemstones and crystals have been considered part of medicine, an extension of the holistic alternative therapies. While each crystal and gemstone has different properties and functions, it is the energy of the crystal that draws you to it.

Other alternative therapies include meditation and dream analysis. What is it that your dreams are trying to tell you? Sigmund Freud saw dreams as "the royal road" to the unconscious and developed dream analysis, or dream interpretation, as a way of tapping into your unconscious. Meditation or mindfulness is opening awareness within yourself. Lisa can help you uncover the deeper meanings contained in your dreams.

Tarot cards are connected to astrology through their similarities. Where astrology encompasses the four elements of air, rain, fire and earth; tarot has four suits that overlap each other as swords, cups, wands and pentacles.

Within the 78 tarot cards are a group of 22 called the Major Arcana. It is here that the 12 Zodiac signs are contained. The more obvious ones include Gemini – The Lovers, Leo – Strength, and Libra – Justice. Lisa provides both astrology and tarot card readings.



A display of chakra bowls.

Chakras, focal points used in a variety of ancient meditation practices, provide yet another view of our inner spirituality and also encompass astrology. The seven chakras include the Crown – the connection to the large universe, Third Eye – that corresponds with Leo and Cancer, Throat – that includes Gemini and Virgo, Heart – that represents Taurus and Libra, Solar Plexus – that comprises Aries and Scorpio, Sacral – that encompasses Sagittarius and Pisces, and finally, Root – that signifies Capricorn and Aquarius. Lisa provides insight into each of the Chakras as they relate to you specifically as well as spiritual alignment and energy.

The Astrology Shop is open Monday through Friday from 11:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. by appointment only. Masks are required and hand sanitizer is available. Call (707) 200-1877 for an appointment. Lisa also makes arrangements for hours outside of normal business hours to accommodate your special scheduling needs.



Churches Under Our Big Sky

Photographer: Scott Brizel

Our Delta Sky is witness to, and witnessed by, several houses of religious worship in Rio Vista. Here are some impressions by Rio Vista's religious leaders about the Delta's Big Sky.

St. Brigid's Episcopal Church, 218 California Street, Reverend Susan Reeve, (707) 374-2667, <http://stbrigidsriovista.org/>

Reverend Susan Reeve tells us that our sky has always been important to her and that she often reminds her parishioners not to miss what's going on up there. "It's...the biggest part of creation that we can ever see...it's absolutely an affirmation of the workings of God in our lives and the way The Creation came into being. It's all up there for us to look and wonder at."

She cites Bible Psalm 19:1, which states, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork... throughout the ends of the earth, and it booms with joy."

Reverend Reeve also quotes from Haydn's oratorio, "The Creation," which utilizes an early 18th century text by Joseph Addison based on Psalm 19. "The spacious firmament on high; with all the blue ethereal sky; and spangled heavens, a shining frame; their great origin proclaim; the unwearied sun from day to day; does its Creator's power display; and publishes to every land; the work of an Almighty Hand."

St. Joseph's Catholic Church, 130 South 4th Street, Father Mervin Concepcion, (707) 374-2155, <https://stjosephriovista.org/>



The inspiring St. Joseph's steeple.

Father Mervin Concepcion remarked about Rio Vista's view of the Central Valley sky: "Seeing the clear blue sky and all kinds of birds during the day, and planets, stars and strange lights at night, one can say that God is with us." He adds, "And indeed, the picturesque of a clear blue sky does sometimes help to remind us that we're not alone."

Windborn Christian Church, 300 Main Street, Pastor Dustin Butler, (707) 374-4910, <https://windbornchurch.net/>

When asked about the impact of the Delta skyline, Pastor Dustin Butler said he felt that "everywhere we look in our beautiful Delta surroundings, we see the handiwork of God's loving care and grace." He added that for him, the Central Valley sky conjures both Gerald Manley Hopkins' 1877 sonnet, Pied Beauty, "Glory be to God for dappled things — For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow," and Psalm 8:1 from The Bible, "God's glory is set in the heavens for us to observe and proclaim."

We didn't hear from these churches but gathered the following information from their web sites or Facebook pages.

Assembly of God, 1110 State Highway 12, Reverend Sean P. O'Kelly, (707) 374-5442, <http://www.rechurches.com/>

Calvary Chapel of Rio Vista, 401 Montezuma Street, Pastor Noel Reese, (707) 374-2579, <https://www.calvarychapelriovista.com/>

Church of Christ, 57 N. 3rd Street, (707) 374-6741

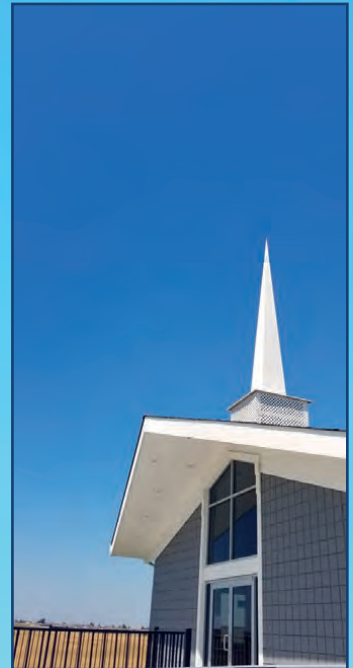
Church of Jesus Christ of LDS, 1050 Flores Way, President Ballard, (707) 374-5003, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org>

First Congregational Church, 230 Sacramento Street, Pastor Frank Ward, (707) 374-2033, <https://www.fcchurchrv.com/>

Grace Pointe Church, 125 Sierra Avenue, Pastor Sean McDonald, (707) 374-2015, <https://ubcriovista.org/>

Lighthouse Ministries, 101 Montezuma Street, Pastor A.P. (707) 374-0211, <https://www.facebook.com/riovistalighthouse2017/>

New Pilgrim's Fellowship, Veteran's Memorial Building, 610 St. Francis Way, Pastor Ella Ray Toscano, (707) 374-2187



Assembly of God church.



First Congregational Church.

Sky

Photo: Courtesy of RVFB drone

Big Sky Farming & Ranching

Writers: Dennis & Marilyn Elliott

Like the ever-changing Delta skies, farming in the Rio Vista area is an unpredictable business. Yet, more than a hundred farming families

have thrived here since well before Rio Vista was incorporated as a city in 1893. The livestock they raise and the crops they grow have changed many times during the last century and a half. Farmers and ranchers have survived despite natural disasters, advances in technology, and ongoing international price competition. They did this through their willingness to take a risk, their determination, courage, and love of the land, and big skies here in the Delta.

Long-time Rio Vista agricultural families, such as McCormack's, Baldwin's, Hamilton's, Cook's, Emigh's, and more, are still successfully farming and ranching today. Well before California became a state, these families and uncounted immigrant workers came for the opportunity and found the Delta a safe, welcoming place to work and raise their families. Many workers settling here came from China, Japan, the Philippines, Portugal, Germany, Scotland, Canada, and Mexico.



Sunrise over the Baldwin Ranch. Photo: Dennis Elliott

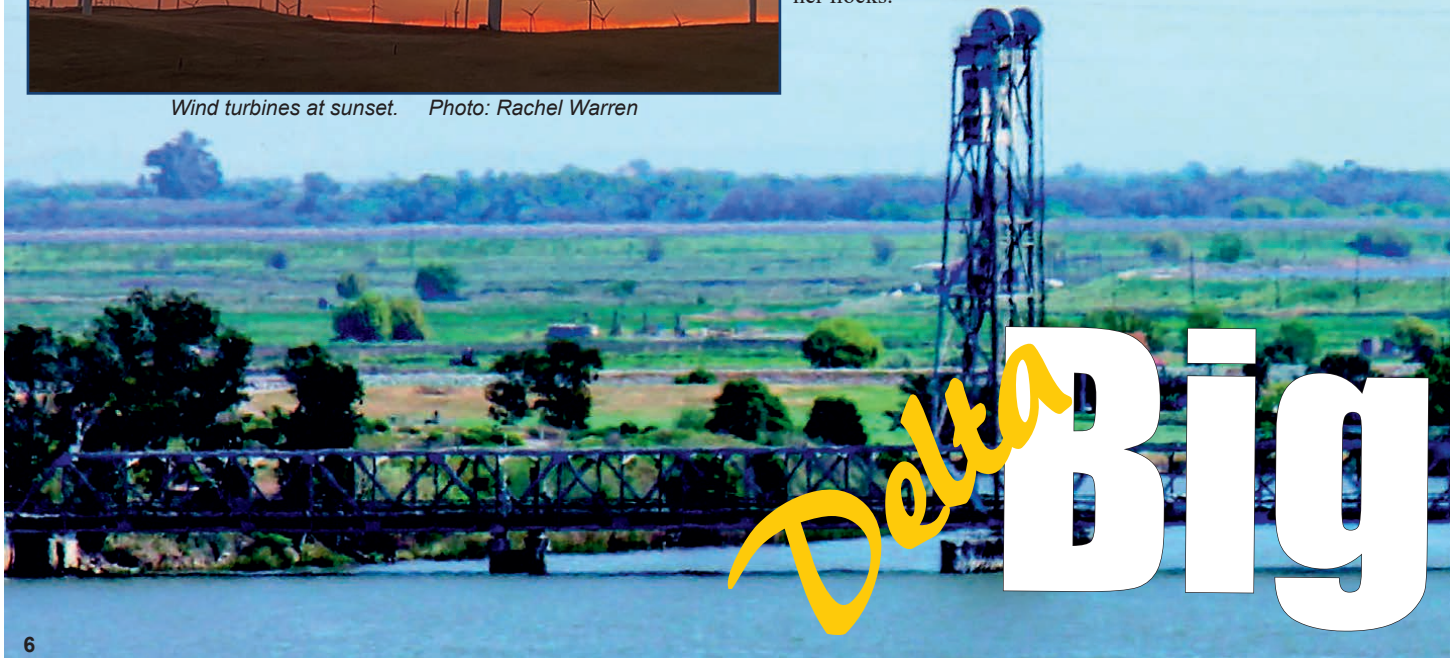


Wind turbines at sunset. Photo: Rachel Warren

From the 1890s until the 1930s, asparagus production was so big that over 350 camps housed upward of 7,000 farm workers. This lasted until asparagus became a victim of foreign price competition. Farmers proved their resilience and adapted to the change. Hamilton Brothers rancher, Richard Hamilton, a 4th generation farmer, states "...over 150 years the farm grew asparagus, then later sugar beets, almonds, peaches, raised cattle, then sheep, and then cattle again. Today we are growing wine grapes like the McCormack's and farms around."

Just up the hill from the Hamilton Ranch is the McCormack Ranch. Founded by her grandfather, Dan McCormack, third-generation rancher Jeanne McCormack successfully raises sheep and goats and was the first to experiment with growing wine grapes in the Rio Vista area.

Because of her love and respect for the land, she practices humane and sustainable ranching practices. She grows several varieties of hay, which keeps down environmentally harmful weeds in pasture lands and are a replaceable food supply for her flocks.



Galaxies and Twinkling Stars

Writer: Robie Williams Photographer: Rob Stahlman

Danielle Simpson, the owner of the local Simpson Ranch, raises the world's second-largest breed of horse, the Percheron. The adult Percheron stands up to 76 inches from the ground to the withers (19 hands). Once a warhorse, they are now powerful draft horses weighing up to 2,600 pounds. They are also excellent carriage horses. If you get lucky while taking a drive in the back hills of Rio Vista, you may see Danielle training teams of two, four, or six Percherons in front of a buckboard wagon.



Percheron draft team.
Photo: Simpson Ranch

It takes an abundance of land and clean air to support the ranches of Rio Vista. Newcomers to the area are rewarded with a big sky environment to raise a family and enjoy the Sacramento River Delta.

When farmers and ranchers were asked how their lives

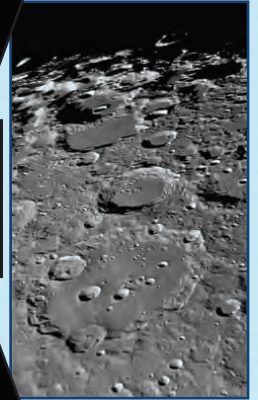
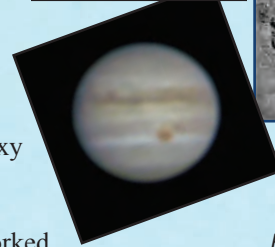
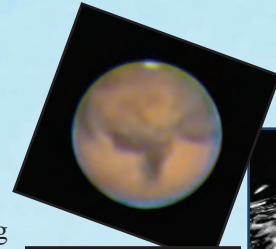
would change if they had to leave the farm and live in a large city, the most common response was the equivalent of a resounding, "Won't happen!"



Percheron mare and new foal. Photo: Dennis Elliott

The big open skies of the Delta provide a look at the heavenly bodies and constellations when night falls in Rio Vista.

Catching up with Rob Stahlman is no easy feat! Rob has many irons in the fire including lead guitarist for the River Ratz, a local band, and teaching music at the Art & Music Center in Rio Vista. Though it's nightfall that really draws Rob's attention. That's when he looks through his telescope and sees the Orion Nebula, the Andromeda Galaxy or a constellation or two.

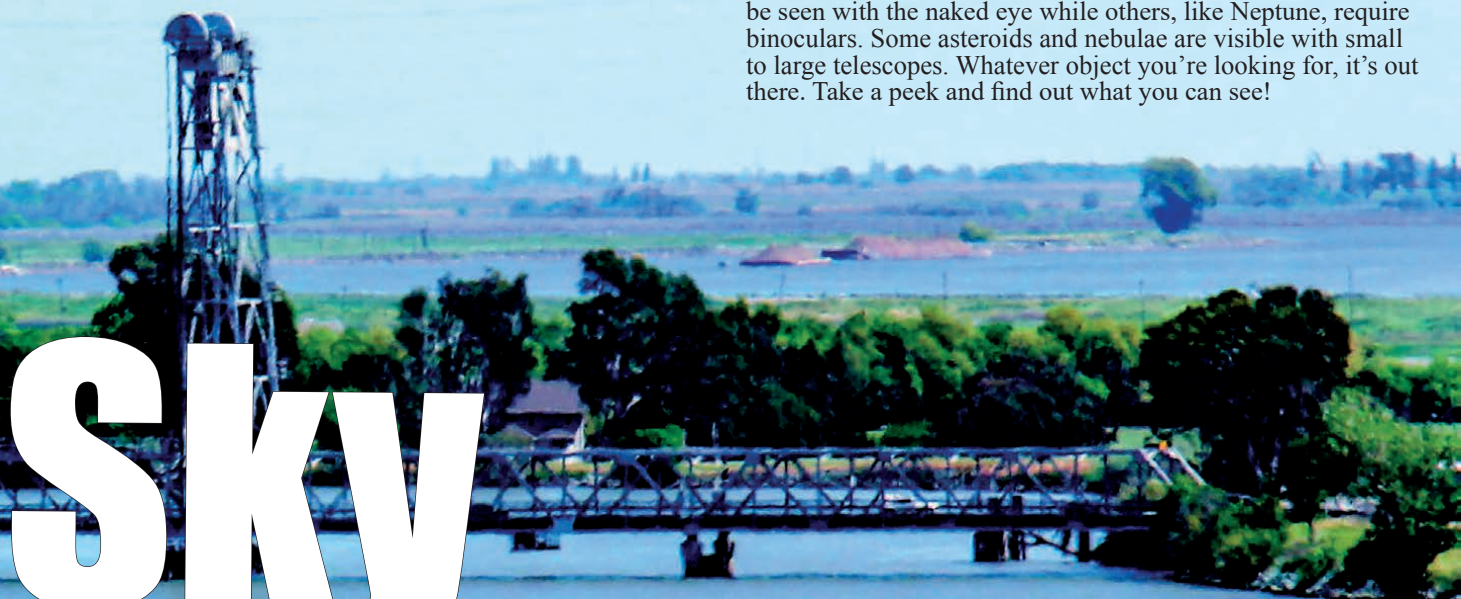


Mars, Saturn, Jupiter and Clavius, one of the largest crater formations on the Moon.

Photos: Rob Stahlman

Rob lived and worked in the Bay Area prior to moving to Rio Vista in 2019. Originally from Concord, Rob appreciates Rio Vista's night sky. "The attraction of Rio Vista for astronomy is due to Rio Vista (in a yellow zone [indicating relatively low light pollution]) being far enough away from the heavily light polluted orange/red zone light pollution domes of Fairfield/Vacaville, Antioch/Brentwood, Lodi/Stockton, Sacramento. We can see the Milky Way on good nights, yet we are still in proximity of these large urban areas and the Bay Area." Rob continues "Because of the wind it blows away debris so we get good transparency."

If astronomy interests you, check out the website theskylive.com. The site provides a list of optimal viewing times and equipment needed to view the solar system objects from dusk to dawn in Rio Vista. Planets like Mars, Jupiter and Saturn can be seen with the naked eye while others, like Neptune, require binoculars. Some asteroids and nebulae are visible with small to large telescopes. Whatever object you're looking for, it's out there. Take a peek and find out what you can see!



Sky

Photo: Jan Vick

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Canna-Art

Writer: Raina Rivera

The Delta has always been a tourist attraction. There is great fishing, waterways for days of play, scenery that looks like a Monet painting, and historical places of interest. Rio Vista, always known for having wind and water, now has weed and art. A few years ago, the City of Rio Vista decided to sell part of the old airport property as multiple plots for a new cannabis business park. This brought many needed jobs closer to home, added funds for local community and city projects, as well as retail for the cannabis consumer, whether adult-use or for medical needs.

With the world having been hit with a series of history-making events, there has been a new wave of artists. People have found the opportunity to explore talents that they didn't find the time for previously. This has brought us a new sort of renaissance movement; cannabis is now an essential industry and art is everywhere.

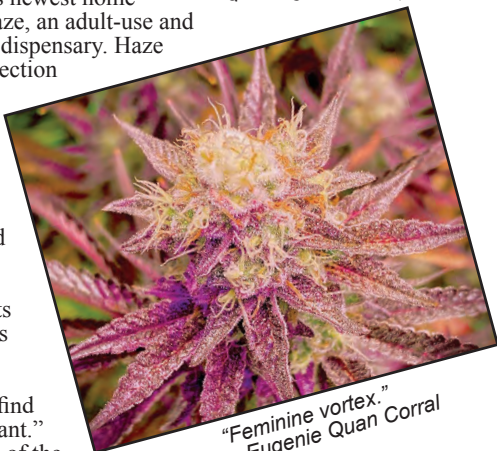
In early 2020, a group of artists had a vision to put art all over the Delta, and a bay area cannabis company wanted to make packages a little more appealing and fun to look at. That cannabis company made its newest home in Rio Vista as Haze, an adult-use and medical cannabis dispensary. Haze already had a collection of high demand cannabis, as well as more exotic strains that called for more than a branded label, and "Canna-Art" was born. Packaging featured the talents of Bay Area artists on famous strains like "Jack Herer" and the harder to find "Magenta Hashplant." They also put one of the most liked pieces of art on their new shirts, creating a fashion piece and not just a promotional item.

Now when you enter the Haze showroom, it's more than spacious, with a display bar of Canna-Art cannabis, easy to see displays of products, and high ceilings like a gallery. That's where you can find that group of Delta artists, organized as "The Traveling Art Show," by Jake Kimbrell and Haze marketing. The walls feature rotating artists from all over the Delta, including mediums such as photography, painting, and digital designs. There is something to interest everyone. Haze gives a home to art that was being left unseen in closets and garage studios. Re-marrying cannabis and art in these times enables you to escape and enjoy life a little.

Haze, and the art gallery that changes monthly, is worth the scenic drive and a visit.



Art used in product packaging.
Photo: Raina Rivera



"Feminine vortex."
Photo: Eugenie Quan Corral

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Delta Photographers

Writer: Doris Noriega

The California Delta is 1,100 square miles of natural beauty that includes water, land, and amazing sky. It is formed by the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers.

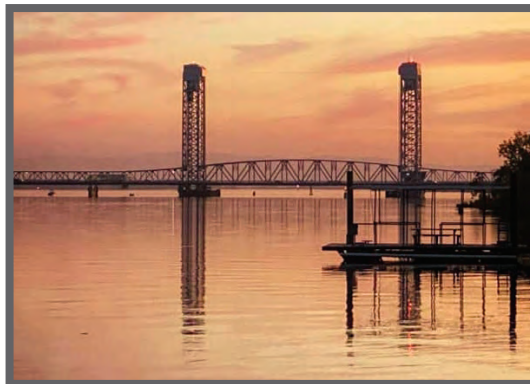
Within this area is some of the most beautiful and picturesque scenery in California. To capture this beauty are a number of very talented professional and amateur photographers. They photograph the magnificent sunrises and sunsets along the rivers, boats, marinas and resorts, and wild life. Lastly we have those quintessential bridges and unique towns and communities that dot the Delta.

Jake Kimbrell

is one of the wonderful photographers who captures the essence of Delta life. Jake moved to Rio Vista five years ago to be close to family. He



Photographer Jake Kimbrell.



"Sunset" by Jake Kimbrell.

is great. Not only would this enhance the way of life for local citizens but also attract tourists who would boost our economy.

Before coming here, Jake was a commercial artist and had owned galleries and studios. Presently, he is the coordinator of "The House by the River Traveling Art Show," which showcases his work and that of other local artists. In addition, Jake enriches the lives of others by volunteering at the VA Mental Health Recovery Center where he facilitates writing and art classes.

His goal is to help other veterans by exercising their creative muscles and thereby increasing their mindfulness



Photographer Yvonne Camper.

and focus. Furthermore, Jake finds that encouraging and inspiring veterans to write and create art opens the mind and soul to a healthy more positive way of solving problems.

Yvonne Camper

has lived here four and a half years and says that moving to Rio Vista has been a wonderful and rewarding decision. As a photographer and artist the Delta has given her a whole new environment to explore with a wide range of subjects to photograph. She enjoys photographing the wildlife and the seasonal changes of the landscape. The art communities in Trilogy and the Delta are teeming with talented artists. Yvonne has displayed her work at many of the Trilogy art shows where she has won several awards. She enjoys meeting and learning from the other photographers in Rio Vista and the Delta community. The camaraderie and generosity of other artists has inspired her to continually improve her skills and open her eyes to even more

artistic possibilities. Yvonne sells her work at the RioVision Gallery, The Point, and other Delta art shows. She feels there are many opportunities to give back to the community. Yvonne teaches iPhone photography to budding photographers. She enthuses, "It is so neat to see their eagerness to learn and how creative some people can be."

Yvonne has taught several classes so far and hopes to teach more in the future. The preserving of the Delta's beauty in her work is very fulfilling. One final note... Yvonne actively volunteers at the Rio Vista Food Pantry, delivering food to seniors.

Don Wisdom grew up in the Delta on Ryer Island and attended both Rio Vista High School and Delta High. He has always been interested in photography but became more serious about it when he was in the military stationed in Europe. Don's position in the Army allowed him to do a lot of traveling, and since cameras were cheaper overseas, he was able to purchase high quality gear. It wasn't until about eight years ago when someone offered to buy one of his photographs that he gained the confidence to sell his work professionally. Having grown up on a ranch,



"Boaters Relaxing on the River" by Jake Kimbrell.



"Sandhill Crane" by Don Wisdom.

Catching Delta Beauty

Don's Delta roots and his background in the agricultural industry, has strongly influenced his work. He loves to photograph not just the scenery in the area but also the wildlife. Don's advice to aspiring artists is that the Delta "...is just full of opportunities for the craft. Fulfillment has to be in your satisfaction with your work as most artists eventually come to realize." He feels that support for one another artistically is very important and that everyone benefits by working in a cooperative and nurturing environment. Don is active in promoting art and photography at various art shows throughout the region such as at the Delta Bay Park and the Ryde Hotel. Finally, Don is one of the founders of "Delta News" on Facebook. The site, with over 9,000 members, promotes small businesses, artists, and photographers in the Delta.

Demi Stewart is a 4th generation "Deltan" and has lived in the Walnut Grove area for over 45 years. Her love and appreciation for the Delta was amplified when she became a bridge operator and was able to spend hours, days, and months in the midst of one of the most beautiful areas in the world. The "Delta News" Facebook page provides her with a place to share that love through photos with so many other photographers. Their support and generosity has given her the courage to embark upon a journey to becoming a "real photographer," says Demi. She feels the Delta is a great place for anyone aspiring to express their thoughts and feelings through their art and to have a positive impact.

Demi feels the Delta artist community is growing into an important presence, drawing visitors to the area. She states that artists are hard working and inventive

in finding ways to share, showcase, and promote their work. Demi emphasizes that working with receptive city leaders, community organizations, and business owners, benefits every town in the Delta. Rio Vista and many other towns have their own distinctive personalities that appeal to the public and bring in much needed revenues to the local businesses. Finding ways to incorporate and promote local artists from all areas, whether music, performing arts, or visual arts, can only make our communities more appealing to visit. For artists, with drive and determination, who want to bring their creativity alive and to be part of a new adventure, the opportunities are endless.

Greg Mitchell has lived in Rio Vista for 57 years. He knows the Delta and all its unique and special features "through and through." Greg's interest in photography came about in a very unique way. Because of health reasons he started walking in the early morning hours. The night before he would listen to the weather forecasts, and particularly the time of sunrise, so that he could time his walks appropriately. He noticed that every new sunrise was different depending on the cloud formations, fog conditions and smokey atmosphere during fire season. That is when he decided to start taking photos with his iPhone 3. He wanted to record that distinct Delta beauty that he so enjoyed. Eventually Greg started posting his photos on Facebook and then on the advice of his daughter he began posting on Instagram. That was the birth of the "RV Bridgeman."



Photographer Greg Mitchell.

At that very same time KCRA3 used one of his bridge photos as the background for the news and weather report with Mark Finan. KCRA 3 continued to show Greg's photos of scenery and local events. It became a goal of Greg's to have his photos used regularly on the news. Not only was he determined to take the best shot possible but also to use new and varied editing apps on his phone. This is how he made his work look so distinctive.

Greg strongly feels that the Delta offers the best of everything for photographers to capture. In light of that, he hopes that the cities along the river open up more places for photographers to display their work for free. This is why Greg uses Facebook and Instagram to share his work so everyone can "see what he sees everyday." It is true that "art is in the eye of the beholder" and he appreciates the opportunities to have conversations about his work through private messenger on Facebook. Greg sells his work through a number of different venues and gives back to the community by donating his canvases to area fundraisers throughout the year. His favorite saying is "Peace Baby!" Catch Greg's work at rvbridgeman.smugmug.com.



"Rio Vista Bridge" by Greg Mitchell.



"Great Egret" by Demi Stewart.



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Hog August Bites

Writer: Robie Williams

We're back! Hog August Bites 2021 is back on Saturday, August 28, 2021 with a few new additions and some tried and true experiences that shouldn't be missed. Set in downtown Rio Vista under wide open skies with the Sacramento River in the background, the event starts at 10:00 a.m. and ends at 11:00 p.m.

This entertaining family event delights attendees with great food, cold drinks and plenty of activities for the kids. Send the kids down the waterslide or into the bounce house for a memorable fun time. Then stop by the selfiestation, grab some props, and strike a pose. Bring dancing shoes to salsa, mamba, twist and boogie woogie throughout the day. Music starts at 10:00 a.m. and features some returning bands and a couple of new ones. Scoot your boots to the music and dance the night away until 11:00 p.m.



Signs pointing to the many festival activities.
Photo: Robie Williams

Is your car an awesome oldie, a classic restoration, or a car or truck that's under construction? How about a hot Corvette? There's always room at the car show location for classic cars, trucks, and even some unique foreign models. Get car show applications in early to ensure a goodie bag, complete with T-shirt and dash plaque, for \$30.00 or sign-up the day of the event (goodie bags available while they last).

Chili and rib cookers mix it up on Main Street and in the City parking lot where you can watch and chat with the cooks. Just follow your nose to the enticing treats that they'll be preparing. Local Delta Fire Departments are invited to compete with their favorite firehouse chili as are local businesses. Challenge a friend or neighbor to submit their entry and bring the heat. Applying to the chili contest is free, but requires a \$50.00 refundable cleaning deposit.



Rib cookers downtown.
Photo: Robie Williams



Chili contest winners.
Photo: Robie Williams



One of the festival bands.
Photo: Jim Pezzaglia



A few of the many classic cars at the car show.
Photo: Robie Williams

is Back!

Past attendees consider this event to have some of the best dang chili cooked on the Delta! Chili teams gather early in the morning with their secret ingredients to cook-up huge pots of chili for tasting. Purchase a tasting kit for \$5.00 from the Chili & Rib Tasting Booth located at Front and Main Street. After their surprising second place win in 2019, can the Byron Family make a comeback and bring in a first this year?

Rib cookers from all over the Delta, East Bay, and Sacramento, and of course local home-town favorites, tantalize all with the smell of ribs cooked according to the rules of the Kansas City Barbeque Society. While this is not a KCBS sanctioned event, it is judged using their criteria for flavor, texture and appearance of the ribs. Once again, Hog August Bites is lucky to have Tracy Allen lead the local panel of judges. Tracy is a Kansas City Barbeque Master Judge.

Returning this year is the People's Choice Award for the best ribs! Stop by the Chili & Rib Tasting Booth to purchase tickets to sample the ribs and vote for your favorite.



Vendors line the streets providing information and plenty of creative things to buy from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Don't forget to stop in the local stores as some are having surprise sales or offering discounts. For that warm August weather there are cold slushy margaritas or icy chilled beer poured by Rotary members for adult cool down. Hot August weather means slushies and ice cold lemonade too. Chili and ribs not your thing? There are a variety of foods available on Main Street as well.

And at the end of the day, when you are done tasting chili, sampling ribs, dancing, shopping and having a good time with friends both old and new, remember, it is all done to benefit the youth of Rio Vista.

Applications for the car show or more information about the chili or the rib contests are on the hogaugustbites.com website or on Facebook at facebook.com/riovistahogaugustbites/. Submit completed applications online, via mail to P.O. Box 89, Rio Vista, CA 94571 or at the RioVision Gallery, 116 Main St., Rio Vista along with any required contest fees. Dates for submission are included on the applications. Questions? Send us a note to info@hogaugustbites.com or call us at (707) 469-3080.



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FORGOTTEN ARTIST OF

Writer: Phil Pezzaglia

Throughout the history of Rio Vista, there are a handful of individuals, who have received notoriety beyond the city limits and surrounding communities. Some of these individuals' time in Rio Vista may have been short, but nonetheless, the Delta and community of Rio Vista made a lasting impression.

That is the case of James Everett Stuart. His name may not be synonymous with Rio Vista. Only a handful of readers may have even heard his name and probably never connected it to Rio Vista.

Stuart was a successful artist during the latter half of the nineteenth century, as well as the beginning decades of the twentieth century. It is said that he produced over 5,000 paintings of western landscapes.



Painter James Everett Stuart.

Stuart is well known for dramatic and moody styles, suggestive of the style of the French Barbizon School.

During his career Stuart traveled throughout Mexico and the northwest with three separate trips to Alaska. His ability to paint both portraits and landscapes made him quite successful. His talents were also shown in his ability to market himself. By the turn of the century he had sold his works to John D. Rockefeller and other influential people.



"Sacramento River" (1924) 14.75 x 19.875 inches, oil on board was sold in Tennessee at auction in 2017.



"Near Rio Vista" (1934) is an oil on board 10 x 15 inches was sold at auction in 2019.



"Sunset, looking down the Sacramento River from below Rio Vista, Cal." (1919) is an oil on canvas 24.2 x 42.1 inches.

RIO VISTA

Stuart's time in Rio Vista may have been short, however the town made a long-lasting impression on him, which can be seen in some of his paintings.

James Everett Stuart was born in Bangor, Maine in 1852. Eight years later the Stuart family moved to Rio Vista. They settled on a ranch near town, where young James enjoyed his boyhood wandering the countryside. He showed an interest and ability in art. His parents encouraged it by sending him to Sacramento where from 1868 to 1873 he received art lessons from David H. Woods, at that time a well-known landscape painter.

Along with several journalists and artists, Stuart co-founded the Bohemian Club of San Francisco in 1872. The club was created as an association for gentlemen connected professionally with art, music, literature, and drama. The club's roster boasted some of the most up-and-coming artists and writers of the period, including William Keith, Giuseppe Leone Cadenasso, Arthur William Best, Samuel Marsden, Thomas Hill, Granville Redmond, and Virgil Williams. The organization met regularly for a summer encampment at the Russian River.

During the late 1870's Stuart attended the California School of Design for five years, where he became a prized student under Virgil Williams and Raymond Dabb Yelland. During that time, he also received private lessons from noted portrait painter Benoni Irwin. After graduation in 1879, Stuart relocated to The Dalles, Oregon. He supported himself by painting signs for the town, which was in the process of rebuilding after a devastating fire that destroyed their business district.

In 1881 Stuart relocated to Portland, Oregon, where he opened a studio. As a leading member of the art scene there, he helped start the Portland Art Club. In 1891 he moved across the country and settled in New York and then opened a studio in Chicago, which remained operating for twenty-five years. He returned to California in 1912, opening a studio in Union Square, San Francisco, which he continued to operate until his death in 1941.

By the early twentieth century, Stuart was a successful well-known artist. He had fond memories and found inspiration in Rio Vista and the Delta, returning several times to capture the area in at least three paintings, shown earlier.

In an article printed in the River News, Stuart described his memories:

"During the morning hours on Sundays, I made color paintings direct from nature of the wonderful subjects near the town, and when work was slack would take up camping and sketching trip to some nearby interesting places...and in that manner secured many of my most important subjects while working at commercial painting to earn my daily bread."

James Everett Stuart's paintings are currently archived in more than twenty-five museum collections across the nation and abroad, including: the California State Library in Sacramento; the de Young Museum in San Francisco; the University of Southern California in Los Angeles County; the White House Museum; and the Witt Art Library in London.

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Talented Local

Writer: Susan Whitesell

Amy Schmidt

Jewelry designer Amy Schmidt and her husband Bert moved to the area to enjoy the Delta boating life and to live in a less populated area. Amy, a retired Pharmacy Tech, has always admired art. When she moved to Rio Vista she decided to take a few art classes and workshops and soon discovered that she had artistic abilities. Her emergence as an artist has been an exhilarating and wonderful experience and she's loved every minute of it.

Amy, an award winning artist, displays her jewelry and mixed media (another of her talents) at the Solano county fair and numerous



Jewelry artisan Amy Schmidt.

art shows. Her contemporary jewelry features copper and brass, natural stones, pearls and/or beads. Old trophies, which Amy deconstructs, are the basis of many of her jewelry findings. Amy enthuses, "My favorite part is torching the metal or is it the etching or is the designing? Oh well, I love it all!"

Amy draws much of her creative inspiration from our beautiful surroundings. She states, "Since we were boaters, we loved exploring the Delta waterways and the Sacramento River and visiting the quaint towns on the river."

Among her many volunteer activities, Amy serves as the curator for the RioVision Gallery. She actively contributed to several other RioVision projects including the murals on Books RioV and the tribute to 9-11 mural in front of the Rio Vista Fire Department. She helped with the planters and pavers in the downtown area as well as planting and weeding. Amy serves on the 2020-2021 RioVision board. She also volunteers for the Solano-Napa Habitat for Humanity, which recently built a six person veterans home in Rio Vista next to the American Legion Hall. Amy also helps at the Yountville Veterans Home in Yountville, part of a small crew due to COVID-19 restrictions, constructing a storage building, a green house, planters, and compost area where veterans have their own space to garden.

When asked, "What do you feel makes Rio Vista a good place for artists to settle?" Amy responds, "The beautiful river, waterways, rolling hills and sunsets."

Amy offers sage advice to creatives considering moving to Rio Vista. "Come and explore for yourself the endless scenes to paint and photograph."

Amy's work can be found at the RioVision Gallery at 116 Main Street.

Birdtown Designs

Birdtown Designs is made up of four artisans with local connections and a unique synergy all their own.

Cindy and Wes Stewart lived in Birds Landing, or "Birdtown" as the locals refer to the quaint enclave, since they were very young. Married 38 years, Cindy and Wes have owned and operated NAPA Auto Parts for almost as long. Cindy says, however, "My heart is in art and always has been and I've loved crocheting my whole life. I love making stuff like blankets and scarves."

Cindy attributes her step-grandmother Reba Sennett for teaching her how to crochet when she was nine years old. The rest of the women picked up the skill again while gathered at Reba Sennett's funeral. Cindy put crocheting aside for several years while she and Jill Graham pursued floral design. Cindy recently returned to crocheting as an art form, creating gorgeous colorful blankets that she gives to family and friends.

Joann Hill, Cindy Stewart's sister, also grew up in Birds Landing. Originally an oil painter, Joann created commissioned drawings for local gas and oil rig owners.

Later, she evolved as a water color painter. Joann and her husband owned and operated a hazardous waste transportation company that was recently sold to a larger corporation. Joann is looking forward to being solely an artist again. In her words, "I've continued to move on with what we're doing here with the jewelry... anything creative, I'm on it!"

Jill Graham moved to the Delta in 1982, and with her late husband Kevin, owned and operated Paul Graham Drilling and a few other related businesses. In 2000, Jill and Kevin moved three miles down the road from Cindy Stewart and her husband Wes in Birds Landing. The couples were close friends for over 40 years and the women are



Jewelry Artisans



Birdtown Designs jewelry artisans, left to right, Cindy Stewart, Joann Hill and Jill Graham. Not pictured, Lane Sennett.

nearly sisters. Jill majored in art at the University of the Pacific but only pursued her interests as a hobby. Her artistic endeavors peaked again when she and Cindy took a floral design class together through Delta College and later began selling hand-crafted Christmas wreaths. As Cindy and Joann added jewelry design to their repertoire, Jill and Lane followed suit. Jill enthuses, "It just has grown... and we're having fun!"

Lane Sennett is married to Jill and Cindy's brother. "I love making things. In high school I wanted to be an art major but I got sidetracked

by science and technology." Lane followed a career in the Navy as a Supply Officer, and after retiring, became a Technology Consultant. Utilizing her technology skills, Lane designed Joann's art web site, brightlinestudio.com, and Birdtown Designs web site, birdtowndesigns.com. "I do all of the technology stuff for both of those websites. I'm still a Technology Consultant but I also love doing all the art stuff."

Cindy got me back to crochet and then she had this brilliant idea of how to crochet with beads."



Cindy Stewart crochets a lariat.

The idea for crocheted jewelry lariats, the group's signature craft, began with Cindy, who saw something similar and thought that she could do it too. Cindy shared the idea and basic technique with Joann who jumped in by organizing Cindy's beads and yarns and rapidly picked up the specialized crochet skills. Jill felt less comfortable with crocheting so she designed the necklaces. Then Lane quickly learned the crochet technique too.

The idea for a collective business began a few years ago with a conversation between Cindy and Joann about how to showcase the various talents that each individual artist brought to the group. Because Cindy and Joann were raised in Birds Landing, the name "Birdtown Designs," quickly emerged. According to Cindy, "We have the opportunity with Birdtown Designs to individually sell our goods – whatever we want to sell and take responsibility for." Earrings, crocheted items such as blankets and scarves, wreaths and paintings are a few of the individual offerings. "We're all independent but we're together."

Cindy enthuses, "Everyone has so much to offer because these guys are so creative with their color theory. They understand it. I just feel it. They add so much more to what we're doing."



Often called "Endless Possibilities," the lariats can be worn around the neck in various ways or even as a bracelet. Lariats vary widely depending upon the threads used and the specific design elements used by each designer.

Continued on the next page.



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Birdtown Designs

Continued from the previous page.

Joann's creations lean towards rocks, stones and a natural look, for example, using cotton rather than metallic thread. She often researches sources for unusual threads and she was the first to combine various threads together. "I like the natural materials with a big splash of



In addition to lariats, Joann also creates earrings and bracelets.

whatever a bead may have to offer." She admits that her style continues to evolve. Her incentive to create, however, remains the same. "I like to learn. I like to challenge myself and go outside of every box. I was once told watercolor painting is the hardest thing you'll ever master, and so of course that's where I went because somebody said it's the hardest thing to do! As much as I like to paint, this is another outlet for me. It's all about color and texture and the elements and principles of design. If color was edible I would eat it!"

Jill's designs are more sophisticated. "All of my threads have metallic in them. I prefer the sparkles and the "bling." In her case, she selects and arranges the beads and stones and Cindy does the crocheting. Jill says, "I've been practicing [crochet] but don't feel consistent enough to actually sell it to someone!" Of her motivation to create, Jill says,



Jill designed and Cindy crocheted these lariats.

"I just like to make things. My whole family is pretty artistic. My grandmother was an interior decorator, my aunt is a seamstress and a graphic designer, my daughter is a graphic artist. It just makes me feel happy to make something for someone else. People enjoy things that are handmade."



Some of Lane's creations.

Lane's designs often feature nautical charms, such as compasses, anchors, sea horses or starfish. "They sort of have a theme – like the sea or the Navy. I also like Celtic charms. I do try to make things symmetrical, especially the part that is hanging down in front. I think about how to place the beads based on how you're going to wear the lariat." About melding creativity to her technology and science background, Lane says, "I love putting together the colors and the patterns and matching everything together with the threads. My husband loves the fact that I make these necklaces because it means I'm not sitting in front of the computer!"

Cindy likes to integrate vintage beads into her designs and often uses unique jewelry discoveries from estate sales. "We've found a lot of old jewelry and torn things apart [to reuse]. I like the aqua colors with the old beads. My motivation for crocheting has always been to make other people happy. I love to share what I've learned and over the years I have taught kids to crochet. And I love color... that's where I get my joy."



Cindy's creations often feature vintage beads and aqua colors.

Check out the unique and beautiful jewelry creations by the creative Birdtown Designs artisans at The Gallery at 116 Main Street or on their website at birdtowndesigns.com.

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RioVision Roundup

Board Member Jim Pezzaglia

Writer & Photographer: Robie Williams

This issue introduces board member Jim Pezzaglia. You may have noticed the Pezzaglia name in each of our magazines detailing the historical homes. Indeed, Rio Vista roots run deep — Jim and Phil are first cousins.

Jim grew up in Rio Vista, attending the Primary School at 445 Montezuma Street, where the River Delta Unified School District office is now located, then, graduating to the Riverview Elementary School where he attended grades 3 thru 8. Rio Vista Joint Union High School was his next stop (now Rio Vista High School). After graduating, Jim attended UC Berkeley where he took art classes including art history as well as his main educational courses and then on to Hastings College of Law to obtain his law degree. Jim also attended San Jose State for his Masters in Business.

Jim worked as a Deputy District Attorney for Contra Costa County for three years, moved on to Phillips Petroleum for three years, and then hung his shingle in Martinez as a private attorney specializing in corporate law. He often assisted his clients with pulling permits for landfills and refineries as well as other business activities.

During the course of vacations and stops Jim frequented art galleries, discovering a love for western art and landscapes. Jim went to art auctions and began his art collection with prints and later, originals. Jim is intrigued by color and the value of color that an artist uses as well as the composition of art. He became interested in different genres—impression and realism appeal to him. Contemporary or abstract art is sometimes too busy for Jim's taste.

Jim later joined with some friends and opened online art galleries. First there was Canyon Oak and then Sagebrush, where they sold prints and originals. Jim also served on the Walnut Creek Art Commission and on the board at Lindsey Wildlife.



As a RioVision Board member, Jim was instrumental in the process of helping RioVision bring to fruition the Rio Vista Public Art Ordinance. This is one of the very first projects that RioVision accomplished.

While Jim hasn't lived in Rio Vista for many years, he comes back frequently for RioVision Board meetings. He leads the Development Committee in fundraising activities, participates in RioVision events, and occasionally attends a Planning Commission meeting. One of his favorite things to do is work a shift in the RioVision Gallery. Jim was one of the RioVision members to help guide the start of the gallery. Why a gallery in Rio Vista? It's about the community, a sense of pride in one's City. Art brings another dimension and Rio Vista has a wealth of artists in different genres to share their art here.

Jim was part of the Rio Vista Joint Union High School Class of '59. He loves telling how that class has had an impact on Rio Vista. Some came back to become teachers, others business people, but it was all for the love of a small town next to the Sacramento River. While it may certainly be a cliché, it is unquestionably true that you can take Jim out of Rio Vista, but you can't take Rio Vista out of Jim.

RioVision Gallery

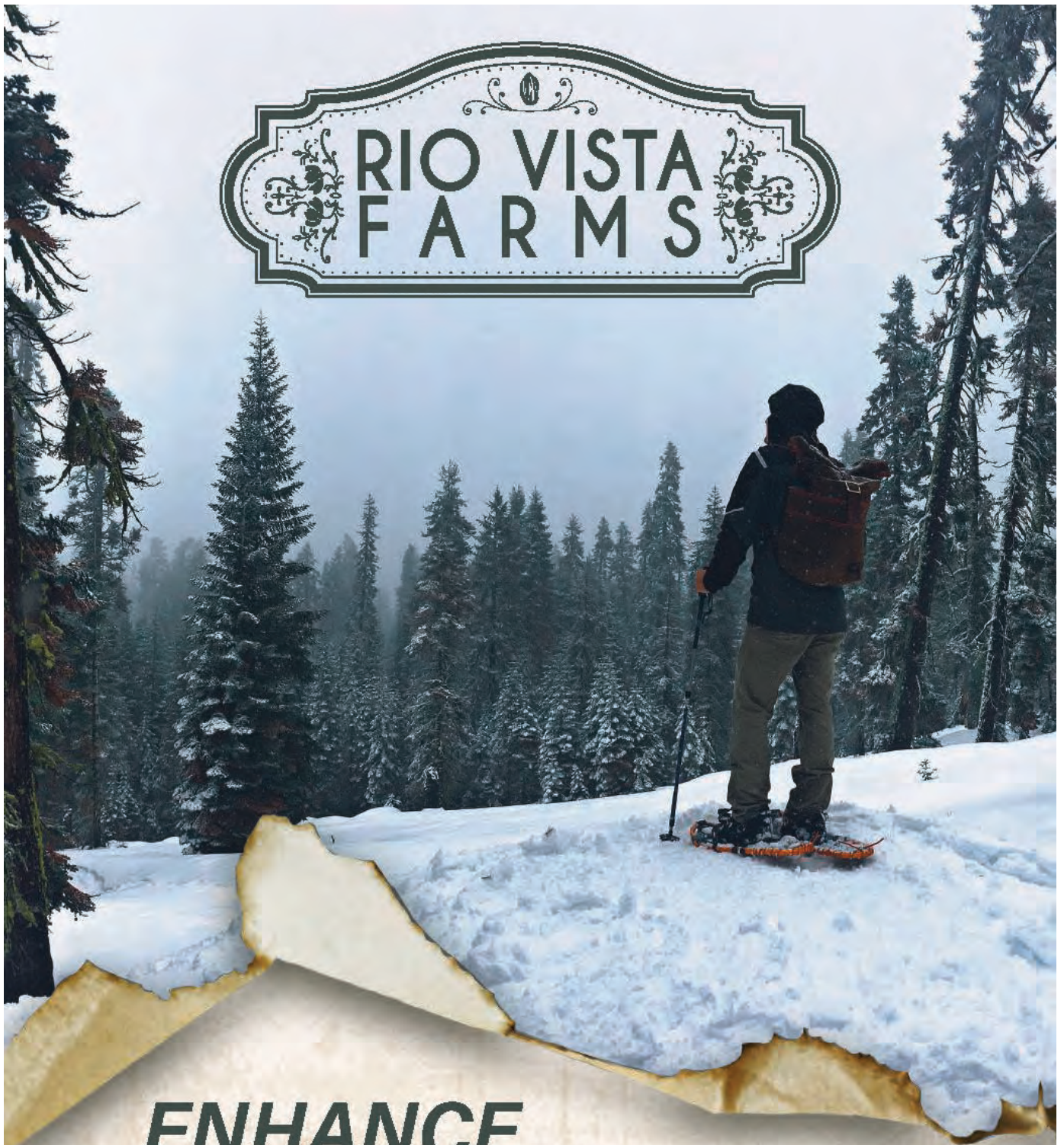
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