

CONNECTION

Sharing the day-to-day learning experience
at

Community Homes & Services
PO Box 744, Novato CA 94948
415-408-3604

www.communityhomesandservices.com

Disability Pride Month

What It Means and Who It Celebrates

July is Disability Pride Month is a time that has roots back to July 26, 1990, when the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law. The thing is, ADA was not *given* to people with disabilities; it was *won* by them, through decades of organizing, advocacy, and civil disobedience. Disability Pride Month honors that history and the people who carry it forward.

The month holds two traditions:

- **Disability awareness** focuses on *education* to help the general public understand the specific conditions, needs, and barriers people with disabilities face.
- **Disability pride** is rooted in the social model of disability, which holds that people are disabled not only by their physical or intellectual disabilities, but by a world built without considering them at all. *Pride reframes disability* as a valued part of human identity rather than a deficit to be overcome or pitied.

At CH&S, this distinction matters. The adults we serve live at the intersection of both traditions every day. They are individuals who navigate real barriers—while also being people with varied talents, diverse passions, humor, and lives fully worth living.



We Celebrate Disability Pride!



Disability and Achievement

Two people worth knowing about this month:

Karen Gaffney has Down syndrome and has spent her life refusing the limits others tried to impose on her. A famed open-water swimmer, she has crossed the English Channel with teammates, swum nine miles across Lake Tahoe solo, and completed swims across San Francisco Bay (below) and Lake Champlain, among many others. She earned her high school diploma, her teacher's aide certificate from Portland Community College, and an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the University of Portland—the first living person with Down syndrome to receive such an honor. She is the president of the Karen Gaffney Foundation, dedicated to championing full inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities in families, schools, workplaces, and communities. As she has said: “I want to show people that the experts are wrong, and we can do anything.”



An illustration of Karen swimming in the Bay.

Do you like to swim?



Tanni Grey-Thompson

Tanni Grey-Thompson was born with spina bifida and became one of the most decorated Paralympians in British history, winning 16 medals across multiple Games in wheelchair racing. After retiring from competition she became a television presenter, currently coaches Paralympian Jade Jones, and serves as an Independent Crossbench Peer in the House of Lords—using that platform to advocate for disability rights, welfare reform, and inclusive sport.

Both women demonstrate something important for our program to hold: that disability and achievement are not opposites, that support and opportunity matter, and that the ceiling on what any person can accomplish belongs to them alone to find.

Frank Norris

CH&S STUDENT PPP

The moment you meet Frank you know he is a man of style and class, someone who really knows how to shop, how to dress, how to put out the vibe. He is a guy with movie star good looks, and the moment he smiles, you know he's got you.

But as you get to know him better, the more you see there is to see! Frank is deep and smart and fascinating and good.



And

A great worker
A great thinker
A great appreciator
A great listener
A great friend
And a great man



Watch Frank's PPP video on our Instagram account
<https://tinyurl.com/mrdeess6>

JULY 2026 NATIONAL DAYS

**National Picnic Month, Anti-Boredom Month, World Watercolor Month,
Grilling Month, Ice Cream Month, Lasagna Awareness Month**

7/1 - Creative Ice Cream Flavors Day, U.S. Postal Stamp Day, Zoo Day

7/2 - World UFO Day, Disco Day, Lint Awareness Day

7/3 - Compliment Your Mirror Day, Eat Your Beans Day, A.C. Appreciation Day

7/4 - Independence Day

7/5 - Hawaii Day, Workaholics Day, Apple Turnover Day, Build a Scarecrow Day

7/6 - Fried Chicken Day, Air Traffic Control Day

7/7 - National Day of Rock 'n' Roll, Koi Day, Macaroni Day, World Chocolate Day

7/8 - Be a Kid Again Day, Video Game Day, Blueberry Day, Dimple Day

7/9 - Cow Appreciation Day, Fashion Day, International Emergency Kit Day

7/10 - Kitten Day, Chronic Disease Day, French Fry Day, Teddy Bear Picnic Day

7/11 - 7-Eleven Day, All American Pet Photo Day, Blueberry Muffin Day

7/12 - Eat Your Jello Day, Paper Bag Day, Pecan Pie Day, Etch A Sketch Day

7/13 - Embrace Your Geekness Day, Beans 'n Franks Day

7/14 - Bastille Day, Be Nice to Bugs Day, Macaroni and Cheese Day

7/15 - Hot Dog Day, Give Something Away Day, I Love Horses Day

7/16 - World Snake Day, Guinea Pig Appreciation Day, Orange Chicken Day

7/17 - World Emoji Day, Tattoo Day, Lottery Day

7/18 - Sour Candy Day

7/19 - Football Day, Urban Beekeeping Day, Ice Cream Day

7/20 - Lollipop Day, Moon Day, Space Exploration Day

7/21 - Comic Con

7/22 - Fragile X Awareness Day, Mango Day, Hammock Day

7/23 - Gorgeous Grandma Day, Squirrel Day

7/24 - Cousins Day, Amelia Earhart Day, International Day of Self Care

7/25 - Merry Go Round Day

7/26 - Disability Independence Day, Bagelfest Day, National Tree Day

7/27 - Love is Kind Day, Bagpipe Appreciation Day, Chicken Finger Day

7/28 - World Nature Conservation Day, National Waterpark Day, Soccer Day

7/29 - International Tiger Day, Lasagna Day, Lipstick Day, Rain Day

7/30 - International Day of Friendship, Climb a Mountain Day, Cheesecake Day

7/31 - Avocado Day, Mutt Day, Chili Dog Day



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

School Principals

Ready to Read READING COMPREHENSION

Mr. Lacuna was Amy's principal at San Rafael High School. He cared about students and wanted them to do well. Amy worked at Wendy's while she was in high school.



Mr. Lacuna thought the senior trip on the Red and White Fleet boat was an important day for all seniors. He wanted to make sure that Amy could attend the boat trip, so he called Amy's boss at Wendy's, explained why the day mattered, and why Amy should have the day off. The boss agreed to give Amy the day off. Amy was very surprised and was able to attend the boat trip with the other high school seniors. She had a nice time. Years later, she still remembered Mr. Lacuna's kindness and support.

Name: _____ Date: _____

School principals review questions:

1. True or False: Amy worked at Wendy's.
2. Who was Mr. Lacuna?
3. Why did Mr. Lacuna call Amy's boss?
4. True or False: Amy had to work and miss the boat trip.
5. What event did Mr. Lacuna want Amy to attend:
 - a. A baseball game
 - b. The senior Red and White Fleet boat trip
 - c. A concert
 - d. A picnic
6. How do you think Amy felt when she got the day off?
7. True or False: Small acts of kindness can make a big difference in a person's life.

And now, the comic book version of our student Amy and her high school principal.



Independence Day Word Search



FLAG RED WHITE BLUE PARADE
FIREWORKS JULY FOURTH

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NATIONAL WATERCOLOR MONTH

A CREATIVE OUTING WITH KATIE

While reviewing the national days, weeks, and months celebrated in July, Katie and Thea discovered that July is National Watercolor Month. Katie was especially interested because she enjoys expressing her creativity through art projects which she says are "therapeutic and centering."

As it happened, a new art supply store recently opened across the street from the office. So Katie and Thea walked over and browsed the supplies. They looked at watercolor paints, brushes, paper, and sketchbooks while discussing different art projects they might try.

Artists have used water-based paints for thousands of years. Ancient Egyptians used them to decorate tombs and manuscripts, and watercolor techniques were also popular in China, where artists painted landscapes on silk and paper. In Europe, watercolor became especially popular during the 1700s and 1800s. Before cameras were invented, travelers often used watercolor paints to record the places they visited because the supplies were lightweight and easy to carry.

Watercolor remains one of the most popular art forms in the world. Many people enjoy it because the paints can create soft, flowing colors and unexpected effects.



For Katie, art is more than just making pictures. It is a way to relax, focus, and enjoy the creative process. A simple trip to the art store turned into an opportunity to learn something new and celebrate a month dedicated to creativity and self-expression.

Have you ever tried watercolor painting?

What would you like to paint?

A New Knowledge Class

Connor and Carolyn got to talking about summer and soon they were talking about memories of eating salt water taffy by the beach. And yes, it was a great topic to turn into a knowledge class! Here is an excerpt:

Salt Water Taffy



Connor Ritchie and Carolyn Walker

Community Homes and Services, Inc. (2026)

The Origins of Salt Water Taffy

What is Salt Water Taffy?

Salt water taffy is a famous candy that first came from Atlantic City, New Jersey, in the 1880s. It does not have real ocean water in it. The name is a fun way to sell the candy because of a flood that happened on the beach.

The Story of the 1883 Storm

The most popular story about the candy started with a big storm in Atlantic City in 1883. The big ocean waves crashed over the boardwalk. The water flooded the candy store of a man named David Bradley. The flood ruined all the taffy he had. Soon after, a little girl came to the shop. Mr. Bradley joked that all he had was "salt water taffy." She bought some and loved the sweet, slightly salty taste. Mr. Bradley's mother told him to keep using the funny name to sell the candy forever.



The Man Who Made It Famous

Another man named Joseph Fralinger helped make the candy famous across the country. In the 1880s, he made the taffy recipe better so it was soft and did not stick. He began putting the taffy in neat boxes. People bought the boxes as a special gift to mail to their friends and family.

How the Candy Is Made

The candy uses simple things that are not from the ocean. The ingredients are sugar, corn syrup, water, butter, and a little bit of regular salt. The taffy gets its soft, chewy feel from the pulling process.



Workers used to stretch and fold the cooked sugar mix many times by hand on big metal hooks. This pulling puts air into the candy and makes it soft.

Nino Surveys the Situation

Bagels and Hotdogs

National Bagelfest Day is on July 26th. What's your favorite kind of bagel?

Caden: Plain with cream cheese

Zachary: I like a plain bagel with butter. I like bagel dogs, too!

Cat: I like a bagel sandwich with eggs and cheese

Martha: I like blueberry with cream cheese

Dana: I like sesame seed

Connor: I like cinnamon raisin, plain, and blueberry bagels

Matthew: Blueberry bagel with strawberry cream cheese

Jennifer: Asiago with strawberry cream cheese

Michelle: I like asiago with cream cheese

Hayley: Blueberry with cream cheese

Justin: I like bagels with butter, no cream cheese



July is National Hot Dog Month! Nino asks, "What do you like on your hotdogs?"

Caden: Ketchup, mustard, pickle relish, and onions

Connor: I don't like hot dogs

Zachary: Ketchup, nothing else

Cat: Pickles mayonnaise and relish

Martha: Mustard and mayo

Dana: I like sauerkraut and diced onions and relish and mustard

Michelle: My new favorite is mustard and sauerkraut

Andrew: I don't eat hot dogs

Matthew: I could go for a chili cheese dog!

Jennifer: I like a lot of mustard and a lot of relish

Hayley: Ketchup, sometimes mustard

Justin: I like mustard and chilli



Salt Water Taffy Survey

We hope you checked out Connor's Knowledge class about Salt Water Taffy. Name three flavors you'd like to try!

Michelle: Salted caramel, caramel apple, and banana

Zachary: Chocolate, rootbeer float, and chocolate chip coolie

Aidan: Caramel, chocolate, and vanilla

Matthew: Caramel apple, pomegranate, and black licorice

Cat: Hot chocolate, chocolate peanut butter, and grape

Martha: Grape, strawberry, and raspberry

Dana: What if I don't really like taffy?

Jennifer: Cherry cola, banana split, and cran-raspberry

Hayley: Peanut butter, orange vanilla, and blue raspberry

Justin: Chocolate, chocolate salted caramel, and strawberry cheesecake

Andrew: Watermelon, raspberry lemonade, and tangerine

Nino: Green apple, frosted cupcake, and buttered popcorn

Connor: Shaved ice, passionfruit, and POG, which is passionfruit orange guava



Hanging out with some of our students...



Be Nice to Bugs Day: Why We Need Our Tiny Neighbors

July 14 is National Be Nice to Bugs Day—and it turns out there's a serious reason behind the silly-sounding name. Bugs do jobs that keep our world running. Bees and butterflies pollinate the plants that grow our food, beetles and ants break down dead plants and animals and return nutrients to the soil, and ladybugs and dragonflies eat the pest insects that damage our crops. Without them, our food supply and ecosystems would be in serious trouble.



The problem is that bugs are disappearing. A 2025 study tracked flying insects in a remote Colorado meadow—far from farms and cities—and found that insect numbers dropped by more than 72% over just 20 years, with rising temperatures as the likely cause. Scientists agree that insect populations are declining at unprecedented rates around the world.

The good news is that small actions add up. Most of the time, the urge to squash a spider or swat a beetle comes from fear or habit—not because the bug is actually dangerous. Try guiding insects outside instead of killing them, plant a few native flowers, and skip the pesticides when you can.

Bugs have been keeping this planet healthy for hundreds of millions of years. They deserve a little kindness in return.

Happy July Birthday!

7/2 - Courtney

7/10 - Peter

7/17 - Justin

7/28 - Connor, Darren



UFOs, Real Pilots, and Hollywood

July 2 is World UFO Day. When Amy heard we were talking about UFOs, the first thing she mentioned was E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial. She remembered the scene where E.T. is being studied by scientists behind plastic barriers. Amy said it reminded her of being in a rehab facility post-knee surgery when everyone was coming down with Covid in 2020. The patients were sequestered behind draped plastic everywhere. She still got Covid. ☹️

Together, we watched the final scene of E.T., where E.T. returns home in his spaceship. Amy remembered how sad it was when Elliott and E.T. said goodbye to each other. Amy also told Thea that Bruce once taught a class about the famous UFO incident in Roswell, New Mexico (Amy has a great memory). When asked whether she believes UFOs exist, Amy said that she thinks there are still many things in the world that we do not fully understand.

Strange Sightings in the Sky

People have reported seeing unusual objects in the sky for many decades. Some sightings turn out to have ordinary explanations, while others remain mysteries.

One of the most famous cases happened on November 17, 1986. A Japan Airlines cargo plane was flying over Alaska when Captain Terauchi reported seeing bright lights outside his aircraft. He described two smaller glowing objects and a much larger object that seemed to follow the plane for hundreds of miles.

The Federal Aviation Administration investigated the case. Although the crew was experienced and respected, investigators could not determine exactly what they had seen. Scientists suggested that the pilots may have been seeing planets and other natural phenomena, while others believe it was a UFO. Even now, the mystery remains unsolved.

Did the airlines believe Captain Terauchi? Well, within months of the incident he was demoted to a desk job because he had “embarrassed” the company. He was fully reinstated a few years later.



Real Pilots on UFOs

We asked a retired Marine fighter pilot whether he believed UFOs were real. He replied:

"I have definitely seen things that cannot be explained through conventional explanations. No question in my mind that we are not alone. But in my day it was career suicide to make anything out of it. I saw things in the night sky moving way too fast in too many erratic directions to be anything man-made. I also saw things on radar moving far too fast to explain... Stories like this are one reason UFOs continue to fascinate people. Experienced pilots are trained observers, and some have reported seeing things they cannot explain." So, maybe UFOs are real, but people are reluctant to talk about it.

The Government is Talking About UFOs Now

Today, the U.S. government uses the term UAP, which stands for *Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena*, instead of UFO. In recent years, military pilots have reported seeing unusual objects they could not identify. The government has released videos and reports about some of these sightings and continues to investigate them. While no official report has proven that aliens have visited Earth, some incidents remain unexplained.



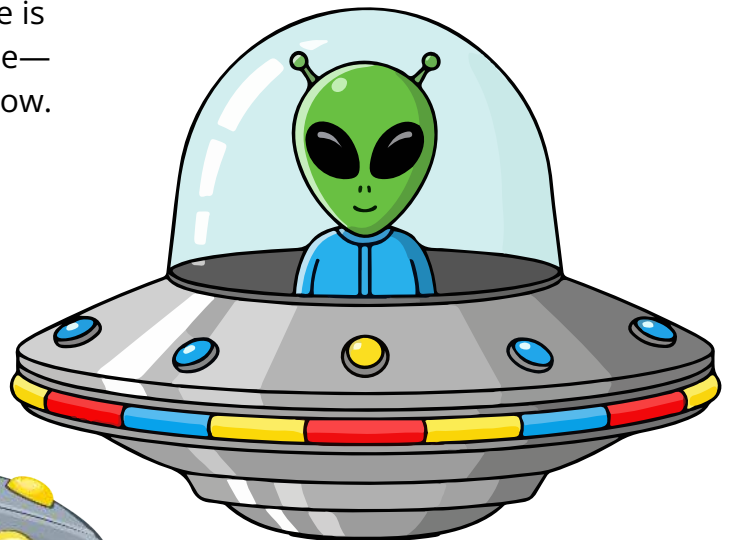
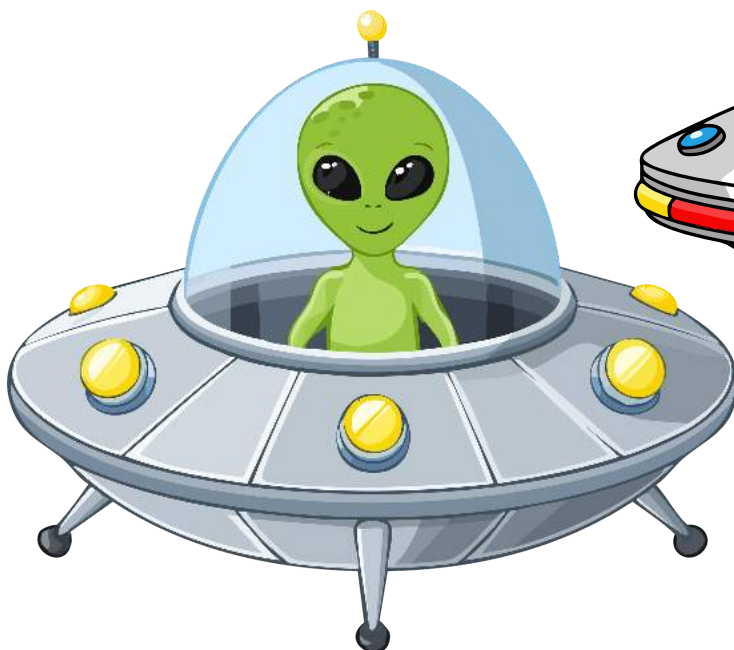
UFOs in the Movies

Hollywood has long been fascinated by visitors from outer space.

- *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) tells the story of people drawn toward a mysterious encounter with alien visitors.
- *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) follows an alien stranded on Earth who later befriends a boy.
- *Independence Day* (1996) imagines a giant alien invasion threatening the entire planet.
- *Contact* (1997), based on a novel by astronomer Carl Sagan. It explores what might happen if humanity received a message from another civilization.
- *Arrival* (2016) tells the story of aliens who communicate in a completely different way than humans.
- *Men in Black* (1997) depicts a secret government agency that keeps track of alien visitors living among us.



World UFO Day reminds us that there is still much to learn about the universe—and so many things we do not yet know.



DARNELL, THE DOGNADO, AND DOG PARK SAFETY

DOG-NADO!

Darnell took her dog, Squonk, to the dog park for a fun afternoon.

Come on, Squonk! Let's go say hello.

They sure have a lot of energy today!

Then disaster struck. A fast-moving dog-nado appeared!

Uh-oh...

Look out!

The dog-nado knocked Darnell off her feet.

Whoa!

That can't be good.

Darnell couldn't stand on her right leg and had to be helped to her car.

Let's get you to your car.

I'll be okay.

Being the tough cookie she is, Darnell drove herself home and waited for Andy to help her.

You drove yourself home?!

Well, somebody had to.

The first diagnosis was a sprain.

It looks like a sprain.

It sure hurts more than a sprain.

The doctor was wrong. When Darnell fell, she broke her shin bone which jammed it into her knee, and broken that too. Two days later she had surgery, 32 stitches, a metal plate, and screws and a knee brace.

I knew it!

Get well soon, Darnell!

Since then, Darnell has been recovering at home. We miss her, and she misses us.

I miss you guys, too!

When is Darnell coming back?

The office isn't the same without her.

DOG PARK TIP: Keep an eye on running dogs, especially large ones. If possible, watch from a bench and stay out of the dog-nado zone!

Beekeeping Interview

By Zachary, Caden, Iris, Darren, Katie, and Jennifer's Parents, Debbie & Scott

How long have you had your beehive(s)?

Going on two years now. This particular hive is new though, we've only had these bees for about three or four months. Our first hive was in the shade, and the bees absconded. The new hive is on the opposite side of the yard, in a nice sunny spot, and these bees are happier now.

Where did your bees come from?

This group of bees we purchased as a new hive. There are places that will sell you what's called a "nuc", which is a container of bees. You just put them in the hive and they say, "yeehaw, we're home!" The first bees we had came from a rescue hive from someone's yard that didn't want them there.

How many bees are inside? Do they ever outgrow the hive?

Thousands! And yes, they're about to outgrow the single hive. I have a new box ready to put right on top, and they'll start moving into the expansion as soon as it's in place.

How can you tell which bee is the queen?

The queen is about twice as big as the other bees. What's interesting to me is how many types of bees there are. Worker bees will collect nectar and turn it into honey, then cap it with beeswax. Male bees are much smaller than the females, and they only have one job, which is to mate with the queen. They're not around for very long, and they're easy to tell apart. When it's time for a new queen, somehow they know. There's something they can feed to a regular female bee that will turn her into a queen, which is called royal jelly.

Have you ever been stung?

I've been stung by a bee before but I've never been stung by these bees, knock on wood! If you do get stung, you want to get the entire stinger out right away, since there's a little sack of poison attached. You can remove the stinger with tweezers.



Here is the "bearding" behavior from the hot day!

Beekeeping Interview

Have you ever used a smoker to keep the bees calm?

Yes, we have a smoker for the bees. The smoke interferes with the bees' pheromones, which disrupts their communication. They don't know if they should be anxious or concerned, so they calm down.

How often do you need to collect honey? Do you have to collect wax, too?

The hive will produce about 50 pounds of honey in a year. We're still a few months out from harvesting though. Bees produce about seven times as much honey as they actually need, so we're never taking more than they need to eat. Some of our neighbors have hives, and they sell honey. We had special labels made so we can gift jars of honey to friends and family—we'll be sure to send some to you guys when it's ready! We want to make some candles with the wax, too.

How often do you have to do maintenance, and what needs to be done?

Since this is a relatively new hive, I've been doing maintenance every two weeks to make sure everything is running smoothly. I have to protect the hive from ants. There are moats of water around the legs of the table it sits on, plus cinnamon at the entrance, since ants don't like cinnamon. I sprinkle rock salt around the perimeter of the hive to help repel hive beetles, which will eat bees. I also put Altoids around the base of the hive, since hive beetles hate peppermint. We buy a big Costco box of Altoids.

How do the bees get in and out of the hive?

There's a slot in the bottom of the hive that serves as an entrance and exit. Inside the hive are 10 frames that have hexagons built into them. The bees deposit the nectar, which starts out as mostly water. Then workers convert it to honey. When a cell is full, they cap it off with beeswax, and that's how they store it. The honey is their food source.

Do you know how far the bees travel from the hive everyday? Do they stay inside when the weather is stormy, or do they go out in the rain?

The foraging bees that go out searching for nectar can travel 2-3 miles. We have a lot of flowering plants right in the yard, so I doubt they ever have to wander that far. We're on $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre. We have an orchard of fruit trees, including plums, apricots, pluots, and lots of citrus. Their favorite right now are the blackberries. They can tell each other where they've been and what they've found, they communicate through pheromones, and they do a little bee dance. I suspect when the weather is rainy, they mostly stay in and hunker down, although there are probably a few brave outliers that will still venture out in the rain.

Beekeeping Interview

How long do bees live?

Only about 3 or 4 months. There is a particular group of maintenance bees that do nothing but take dead bees out of the hive, to make sure the honey doesn't get corrupted. They are undertaker bees. They'll push the dead bees out of the entrance and you'll see bodies beneath the hive.

We've read that bees can recognize people and remember their faces. Do you think the bees recognize and remember you?

Yes, that's true, bees can recognize three or four different people. They definitely recognize me, and Bella, and they're starting to recognize Debbie, too.

How does your dog Jackson feel about the bees?

He feels better about the bees than the bees feel about him. Apparently bees don't like black animals because they resemble bears, which eat honey. The fence around the hive is in place mostly to keep Jackson from getting too close to the hive. But he's not super interested.

Does honey help with allergies?

Yes, I've heard that's the case! Local honey should help with seasonal allergies, since it's made with the pollen around you. It's a desensitization thing—you're getting just a little bit of what bothers you.

What has been your favorite part of beekeeping?

Learning about what amazing little creatures they are! The type of community they have, and how each individual bee has a role, and that role can change over the course of its lifespan. I'm hoping to work up to being able to do maintenance on the hive without a full bee suit. I love how I'm always learning new things about the bees. For example, we had a really hot day in Santa Barbara last week, and when I went out to check on the hive, there were a whole bunch of bees plastered on the outside of the hive. I called Bella, our bee-whisperer, and asked, "What's wrong with them?" and she told me they were doing something called "bearding". Since the hive was overheating, they were protecting the queen, and helping cool the hive down.



Check out the little moats of water under the hive, and the cinnamon near the entrance. Michelle and Jennifer think the salt will help protect the hive from demons and ghosts, too!

Community Homes & Services
PO Box 744 Novato CA 94945
415-897-8676

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