November 2026

CH&S MAGAZINE

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CONNECTION

Sharing the day-to-day learning experience
at
Community Homes & Services
PO Box 744, Novato CA 94948
415-408-3604
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A Day at the Academy of Sciences

This month, three of our students, Iris, Zachary, and Connor, spent a day at the California Academy of Sciences with Dana and Thea. Highlights included the planetarium show Timescapes and Methuselah, a 93-year-old Australian lungfish!

Everyone came away with something different, and Connor came away with a story. A few days later, he sat down and wrote a chronicle of his own. It's a window into how Connor sees the world: how he connects what he sees to bigger ideas, and where his imagination takes him.







A Fieldtrip Recap By Connor

Connor took it upon himself to write about our trip. First he wrote by hand and later he typed his chronicle up to make it ready for this Magazine. Thank you, Connor, for your observations and for sharing your experience with us all! Here is what he wrote:



On Friday, October 16, 2026, me, Iris, Zachary, Dana and Thea went to the California Academy of Sciences.

First, we saw aquariums of different sorts of fish.







- Second, we looked at the venomous creatures (like the velvet ant above)
- Third, we went to the planetarium and saw the evolution of time for the bay area.
- Fourth, I don't know the name of the exhibit that we visited with some whale artifacts.
- Fifth, I think we had lunch at the cafeteria and I had chicken tenders and fries.
- Sixth, I think we visited a gift shop.

Animals at the Academy

- Seventh, we saw an exhibit with wild animals from Africa and an aquarium with real live African penguins.
- Eighth, I think we visited an exhibit with see-through slide show things.
- Ninth, at least some of us visited another gift shop.
- Tenth, we headed out back to Life College.





We also explored some artifacts and fish in the water between things, like petting a bearskin. I had a good time at the Academy of Sciences, including enjoying some exhibits, which I liked. I don't really have a favorite exhibit.

I also pretty much enjoyed a relaxing van ride. Some of the venomous animals I saw were some fish, a snake and a tarantula. Some of the African animals that I liked and saw were antelopes and zebras. I found some things I would like in the gift shop, although I was saving some money and keeping within my budget. Some of the things were a space playset and some candy.

Furthermore, the cafeteria served good *chicken tenders* and fries and somehow reminded me of being at an airport. I saw some interesting fish in some aquariums and enjoyed the fun and interesting place.

NOVEMBER 2026 NATIONAL DAYS

Native American Heritage Month, Career Development Month, Gratitude Month, Family Stories Month



- 11/1 - Daylight Savings Time Ends, Day of the Dead, Cook for your Pets Day
- 11/2 - Deviled Egg Day
- 11/3 - World Jellyfish Day, National Sandwich Day
- 11/5 - Donut Day
- 11/6 - Nachos Day, Saxophone Day
- 11/7 - Play Outside Day, Bison Day, World Numbat Day
- 11/8 - Diwali
- 11/9 - World Adoption Day, Scrapple Day
- 11/11 - Veterans Day, Sundae Day
- 11/12 - Pizza With the Works Except Anchovies Day, French Dip Day
- 11/13 - World Kindness Day
- 11/14 - World Diabetes Day, Pickle Day
- 11/15 - America Recycles Day, Clean Out Your Refrigerator Day, Bundt Day
- 11/16 - Button Day
- 11/17 - Homemade Bread Day, Take a Hike Day, Baklava Day
- 11/18 - Mickey Mouse's Birthday
- 11/19 - Play Monopoly Day, World Toilet Day
- 11/20 - Great American Smokeout, World Philosophy Day, Absurdity Day
- 11/21 - Adoption Day, Stuffing Day, Guinness World Record Day, World Television Day
- 11/22 - Cranberry Relish Day
- 11/23 - Espresso Day, Cashew Day, Fibonacci Day
- 11/24 - Sardines Day
- 11/25 - National Jukebox Day
- **11/26 - THANKSGIVING DAY–HOLIDAY**
- **11/27 - HOLIDAY**, Native American Heritage Day, Black Friday
- 11/28 - French Toast Day, Red Planet Day
- 11/29 - Electronic Greetings Day
- 11/30 - Mason Jar Day, Mousse Day



When Giving Is All We Have

by Alberto Ríos (1952 –)

One river gives
Its journey to the next.
We give because someone gave to us.
We give because nobody gave to us.
We give because giving has changed us.
We give because giving could have changed us.
We have been better for it,
We have been wounded by it—
Giving has many faces: It is loud and quiet,
Big, though small, diamond in wood-nails.
Its story is old, the plot worn and the pages too,
But we read this book, anyway, over and again:
Giving is, first and every time, hand to hand,
Mine to yours, yours to mine.
You gave me blue and I gave you yellow.
Together we are simple green. You gave me
What you did not have, and I gave you
What I had to give—together, we made
Something greater from the difference.

November is National Family Caregivers Month

At CH&S, we want to say

THANK YOU

to everyone who cares for our students at home.



Who are our caregivers?

Parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, and the staff at residential homes.



You cook meals, give medicines, drive to appointments, and help with bedtime. A lot of your work happens when no one is watching. We see it anyway.

Why your care matters



About 6 out of 10 people with developmental disabilities who get services live with family.[1]



Studies show that adults who live with family often feel happier.[2]

When our students sleep well, eat breakfast, and feel cared for, they have a better day with us.

Thank you for going the extra mile



Some of you pack a favorite snack for a hard day.



Some of you send a note about a birthday or a new pet.



Some of you speak up when something isn't working.

We notice, and we are grateful.

Take care of yourself, too

- **Talk to people who get it.** Caregiver support groups can lower stress.[3]
- **Take breaks.** Ask your Golden Gate Regional Center service coordinator about respite, which is a short break from caregiving.
- **Keep small habits.** Get sleep, take a walk, call a friend.
- **Ask for help early.** That is part of good caregiving.

This year's theme is "Care Connects Us."



We agree. Our students do best when home and program work as one team.

Want to share your caregiving story?
Tell any CH&S staff member.

Caregiver Spotlight



"I care for my son, and what keeps me going is his smile and his love of music. My advice to other caregivers is to take one day at a time and remember to take care of yourself, too."

— A CH&S family caregiver

Sources:

1. Larson, Neidorf, & Hall. *Where did people with IDD live in 2022? (University of Minnesota). https://publications.ici.umn.edu/risp/data-bytes/where-did-people-with-idd-live-2022*
2. Grey, Totsika, & Hastings. *(2018). Living with family. Journal of Intellectual Disability Research. https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12479*
3. Dykens et al. *(2014). Reducing distress in mothers of children with autism and other disabilities. Pediatrics. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2013-3164*

Valerie's Calming Artwork



A mandala is a beautiful, sacred circle pattern that has been used for thousands of years to help people feel peaceful and connected. Originally created in ancient India, these colorful, repeating designs are found all over the world today—from traditional sand art made by monks to modern coloring books.

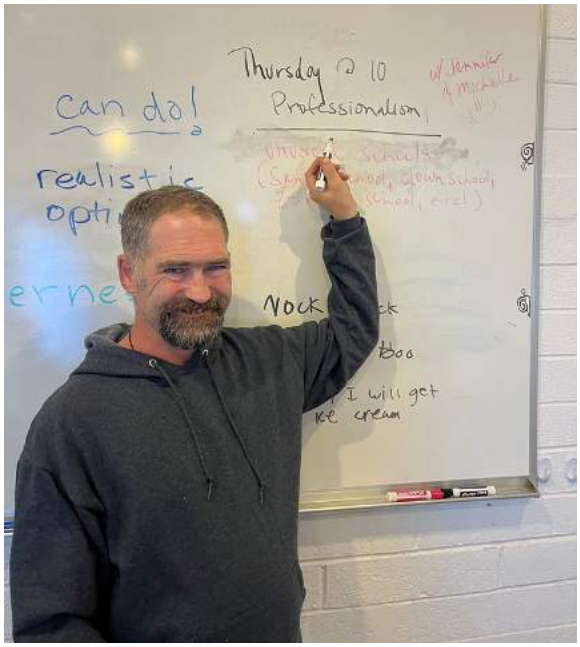
For adults with or without developmental disabilities, looking at or coloring a mandala is like giving the brain a calming rest. The predictable, matching patterns act as a gentle visual guide that slows down a racing heart, lowers stress, and helps individuals focus their attention without needing words. Because it is simple, structured, and rewarding, coloring or creating a mandala is a wonderful, low-stress activity for everyone to enjoy together to unwind and express their feelings, right Val?





Stepping into Motivation with Jason

by Jason and Carolyn



Jason recently started motivating others with a walking text thread. This is also teaching others how to use pedometer apps from their phones. The thread includes both staff and students, encouraging everyone to get their recommended 10,000 steps per day. Daily updates, friendly step competitions, and shared photos from neighborhood strolls keep group members inspired to stay active and achieve their fitness goals together.

Beyond walking, there are many simple ways we can motivate one another every day. Sharing small victories, sending supportive text check-ins, or creating shared goal lists for hobbies and daily tasks can build momentum. Pairing up with an accountability partner or celebrating each other's progress—no matter how small—helps foster a positive, encouraging community where everyone feels empowered to succeed.

Motivation is the internal state, psychological force, or reason that propels, directs, and sustains goal-directed human or animal behavior.

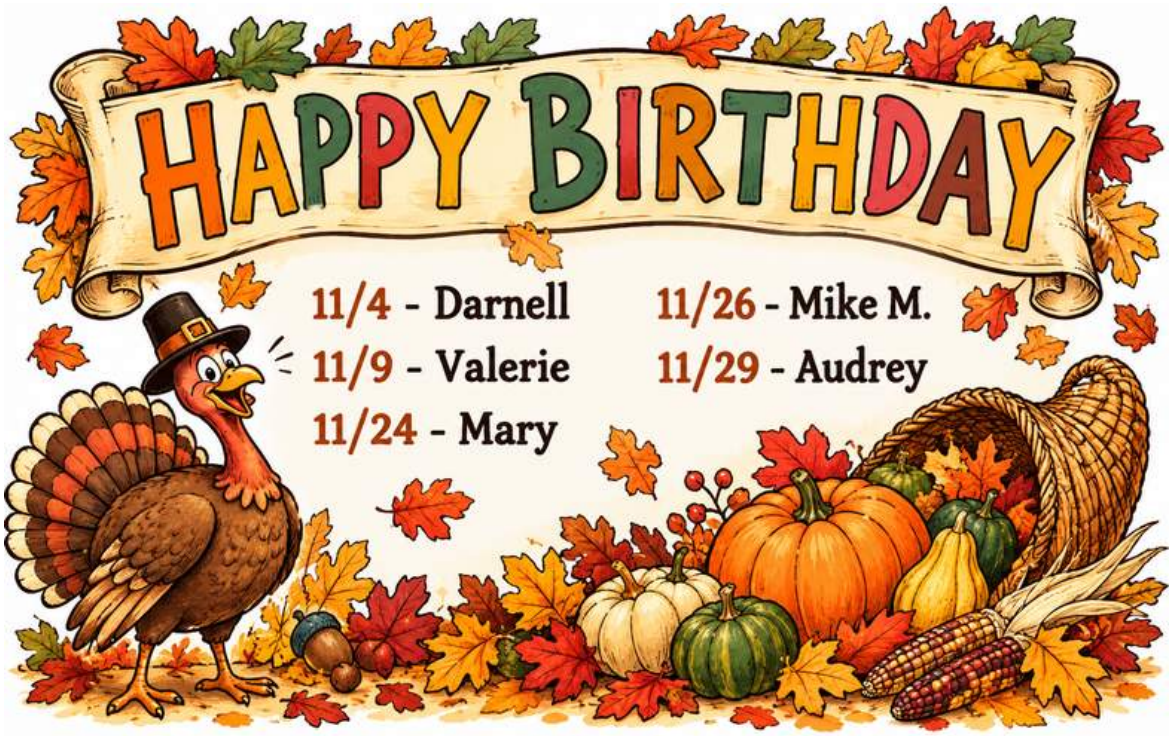
If you would like to join the walking text thread, please let Jason know and be sure to give him your cell phone number.

Below are actual screen shots from several of the walkers' phones.









Birthday Lights

BY CALEF BROWN

Light bulbs on a birthday cake.
What a difference that would make!
Plug it in and make a wish,
then relax and flip a switch!
No more smoke
or waxy mess
to bother any birthday guests.
But Grampa says, "it's not the same
Where's the magic?
Where's the flame?
To get your wish without a doubt,
You need to blow some candles out

Cheerios

BY BILLY COLLINS

One bright morning in a restaurant in Chicago
as I waited for my eggs and toast,
I opened the *Tribune* only to discover
that I was the same age as Cheerios.

Indeed, I was a few months older than Cheerios
for today, the newspaper announced,
was the seventieth birthday of Cheerios
whereas mine had occurred earlier in the year.

Already I could hear them whispering
behind my stooped and threadbare back,
Why that dude's older than Cheerios
the way they used to say

Why that's as old as the hills,
only the hills are much older than Cheerios
or any American breakfast cereal,
and more noble and enduring are the hills,

I surmised as a bar of sunlight illuminated my orange juice.

The Tender Truth: Connor Ranks Chicken Tenders



Some people collect stamps. Connor collects chicken tender experiences.

Loyal readers may remember the “Connor’s Thoughts on Watercraft” article in our September Magazine where he took us aboard ferries, jet boats, and cruise ships. It turns out that when Connor isn't thinking about boats or planes, there's a chance he's thinking about chicken tenders, one of his favorite foods. So Thea sat down with Connor and Darnell to get the official rankings.

The Criteria

Connor is a serious judge, and he has standards:

- Tasty. Original is great. A little spicy is also great.
- Crunchy on the outside. This is non-negotiable.
- Sauce? "Nope," said Connor. A true tender purist.
- Fries? Sometimes. Okay, most of the time.

The Top Three

- First place: Outback Steakhouse. According to Connor, nobody does it better. Outback takes the crown.
- Second place: Le Col Rouge, Novato. Our hometown pick is unfortunately now closed, but when it came to chicken, Connor says Le Col Rouge was one of the best.
- Third place: Harvest Market. Connor had these tenders about three years ago, and he still remembers them. That's the mark of a great tender.

Honorable Mentions

These didn't make the podium, but they all earned Connor's seal of approval:

- FBI Burgers in Novato
- Jack in the Box

The Importance of Crunch

- World Famous Hotboys in Novato
- Local Kitchen
- McDonald's McNuggets (a classic for a reason)
- Safeway, nominated by Darnell, who points out that they're portable and good to take home.
    - That raises an important scientific question: are they still crunchy by the time you get home? We may never know. “We usually eat them on the road,” said Darnell.



A Burning Question: Why don't we see beef tenders or turkey tenders on the menu?

Here's a fun fact: a chicken tender is a real cut of meat. It's the small strip of muscle tucked underneath the chicken breast, which is why it's so tender. Cows have a tenderloin too, but nobody breads and fries it. We call it *filet mignon*. And turkey tenders do exist, but they never caught on the way chicken did. When it comes to tenders, chicken rules the roost.

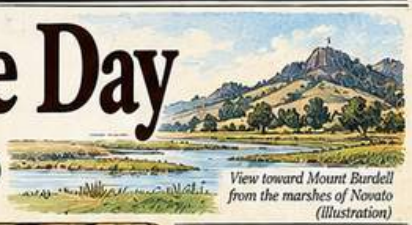
The Final Verdict

According to Connor, the perfect chicken tender is tasty, crunchy on the outside, needs no sauce, and usually comes with a side of fries. Simple, classic, and delicious.

Where can we find YOUR FAVORITE chicken tenders?

Native American Heritage Day

The First People of Novato



View toward Mount Burdell from the marshes of Novato (illustration)

Native American Heritage Day is Friday, November 27

This year, Native American Heritage Day is Friday, November 27 — the day after Thanksgiving. It is a day to honor the people who were here first. It is also a good time to remember something important: Native Americans are not only part of history. They are still here and may be your neighbors today.

What is Native American Heritage Day?

In 2008, Congress passed a law naming the Friday after Thanksgiving as Native American Heritage Day. The whole month of November is also Native American Heritage Month.



Daily Life

The Coast Miwok fished in the bay and creeks, hunted, and gathered plants. Acorns were an important food. People pounded acorns into flour using stone bowls called mortars. The Coast Miwok were also known for their skilled basket making.



Pounding acorns to make flour (illustration)



Coast Miwok basketry (illustration)

Who Lived in Novato First?

Long before Novato was a town, this land was home to the **Coast Miwok** (say it: MEE-wok) people. The Coast Miwok lived in Marin County and southern Sonoma County for thousands of years.

The Miwok population was estimated at around 11,000 in 1770 but significantly declined by the 20th century, with only 491 individuals recorded in the 1930 census.

Coast Miwok villagelets in Novato

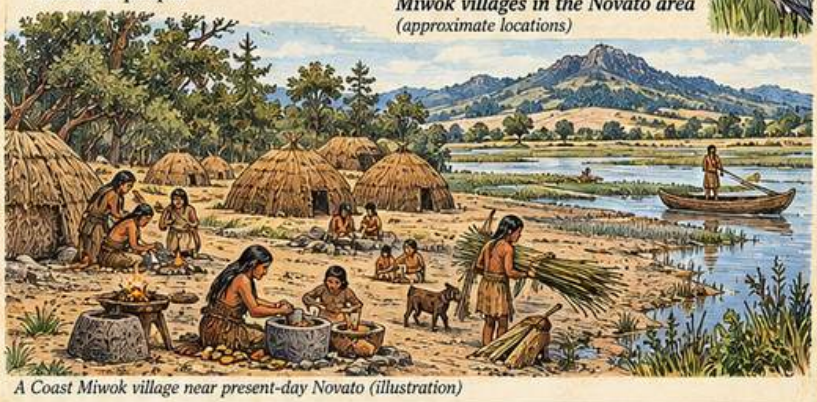
There were several Coast Miwok tribelets/villages right here in Novato:

- **Chokeche**, near today's downtown Novato
- **Puyuku**, south of Ignacio
- **Olompali**, just north of town, where Olompali State Historic Park is now.

Researchers believe Olompali was one of the largest villages in what is now Marin County. Its name likely comes from Coast Miwok words that mean "southern village" or "southern people."



Miwok villages in the Novato area (approximate locations)



A Coast Miwok village near present-day Novato (illustration)

Where this comes from: The village names come from records written down more than 100 years ago, so spellings and exact places may vary (Miwok Village List). The facts about Olompali come from this California State Parks brochure.

Hard Times

When Spanish missions came to the area, Coast Miwok life changed a great deal. Many people were brought to Mission San Rafael to work. Farming and cattle grazing destroyed many of the plants and animals the Coast Miwok used for food. Many people died.

Still, the Coast Miwok did not disappear. In 1843, a Coast Miwok leader named Camilo Ynitia was granted the land at Olompali — his home village.

Later, in 1958, the U.S. government passed a law that ended its official recognition of the tribe. The government treated the tribe as if it no longer existed. That was not true.



Mission San Rafael (historical illustration)

Still Here Today

The Coast Miwok are still here. Today, Coast Miwok people belong to the **Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria**, a tribe made up of Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo people. On December 27, 2000, a new law restored the tribe's federal recognition.

Today the tribe runs programs for housing, education, health, and culture. A group of tribal citizens is working to learn and keep alive the Coast Miwok language.

Native people from many other nations live in the Bay Area, too. More Native Americans live in California than in any other state. They are teachers, nurses, artists, business owners, and neighbors. They may be your coworkers, your doctors, or the families you see at the grocery store.

Places to Visit Near Novato

Museum of the American Indian



In Miwok Park, 2200 Novato Blvd., Novato. The museum sits on the site of a former Coast Miwok village. It has exhibits and programs about Native peoples, past and present. Call (415) 897-4064 to check hours.

Olompali State Historic Park



Just north of Novato. Walk the trails and see rebuilt Coast Miwok homes, which were built with help from Coast Miwok descendants.

Kule Loklo



A recreated Coast Miwok village at Point Reyes National Seashore.

This November 27, take a moment to remember the first people of Novato — and to remember that their story is still going on today.

A Good Habit

When we talk about Native Americans, it helps to use the present tense. Instead of "The Miwok were the people of Marin," we can say "Marin is Coast Miwok land, and the Coast Miwok people are still here."

Sixteen Years Sober

This fall, student Pam received her 16-year chip. That's more than 5,800 days of sobriety, and all of us at CH&S are proud of her and glad to be in her corner.
People in AA often say they don't stay sober through their own willpower. They credit a power greater than themselves, the fellowship of other members, and taking things one day at a time. We celebrate her honesty and commitment to sober living every day for sixteen years.

A little AA history
Alcoholics Anonymous started in Akron, Ohio, in 1935, when a New York stockbroker named Bill Wilson met a local surgeon, Dr. Bob Smith. Each was trying to stay sober, and they found that helping each other made the difference. That idea, one alcoholic helping another, is still at the heart of AA. In 1939 the group published its book Alcoholics Anonymous, known as the "Big Book," which set out the Twelve Steps. Today AA is a peer-support fellowship with several million members in 181 countries, and it is free to attend.

Where do chips come from?
Nobody knows for sure. Temperance societies handed out medallions to people who pledged to quit drinking well before AA existed. AA's own history notes that Sister Ignatia, a nun in Akron who helped many early members, gave out medallions, and an archivist suggested the chip custom may have started in Indianapolis around 1942. AA has no official chip system–each group decides for themselves which milestones to mark.



Sobriety and people with developmental disabilities
Research here is limited, but some patterns are fairly consistent. Reviews have found that people with intellectual disabilities seem less likely to use substances overall, but those who do use them face a relatively high risk of developing problems.

One Day at a Time



Getting help can also be harder. People with intellectual disabilities who struggle with substances are less likely to enter treatment or stay in it, and some professionals who run treatment programs say they lack the training and support to meet this particular group's needs. Given those barriers, a long, steady recovery is worth recognizing.

What sobriety gives back

One of the longest studies of recovery followed 1,162 people for eight years, with more than 94% followed up. The researchers found that recovery grows over time. As sobriety lengthens, improvements show up in health, mental health, relationships, work, housing, and spiritual and social support, and the chance of staying sober the next year keeps going up.

For those of us who aren't in recovery:

- A simple "Congratulations!" means a lot.
- At parties and outings, have good non-alcoholic drinks available, and don't ask anyone why they aren't drinking.
- Remember that AA is anonymous. Celebrate the person, and let them decide what to share about their recovery.

Happy 16 years, Pam!

We accept and appreciate donations of any size or kind.
All donations to CH&S are tax-deductible.
CH&S is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

@Communityhomesandservices

Daniel and Thea researched Pumpkin Destruction Day (11/7) and found that people destroy pumpkins in all sorts of ways including dropping them from a helicopter! Here's their guide to pumpkin destruction:



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

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