

# TOWNS

CLOVERDALE GEYSERVILLE HEALDSBURG WINDSOR SEBASTOPOL BODEGA BAY  
SANTA ROSA ROHNERT PARK COTATI SONOMA PETALUMA

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2011 • SECTION T

**VIGNETTE**  
WINDSOR



**FOR THE BIRDS:** Analy High School students Maiah Alman, 13, from left, Renee Bianchi, 15, and Hayley Louzao, 16, build an owl box at Martorana Family Winery in the Dry Creek Valley.

## Hands-on learning

PHOTOS BY JOHN BURGESS THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

**G**rowing grapes organically means finding alternatives to poison when combatting pests. At Martorana Family Winery, they attract natural predators by installing owl boxes. The Dry Creek Valley winegrowers also attract high school students interested in learning about sustainable farming.

As part of the FARMS Leadership Program, 32 students from six local high schools recently descended on one of the family's vineyards to learn by doing. After a sunny morning of measuring, sawing and pounding, the group traveled to the Martorana family's Grape Creek vineyard to help introduce plants that will stabilize the creek bank.

"Allowing the FARMS Program to learn about what we do is an opportunity to give back to our community and spread the word that farming and fish can coexist harmoniously," said Gio Martorana.

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**TOOL TIME:** Shelby Gray, above, of Sonoma Valley High and Shauna Bernardi of Carpe Diem High hammer nails into owl boxes, while Tyler Ross, left, of Windsor Oaks Academy uses a drill.

### INSIDE

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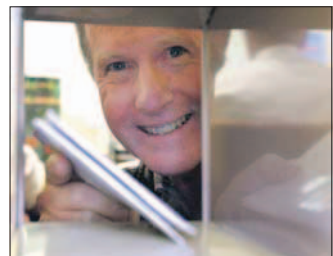
**NORTH COUNTY:** Downtown Healdsburg still has mailboxes, thanks to Steve Perkins, right, at Amoruso Printing **2**

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Ideas or questions? Send them to section editor **Linda Castrone** at [linda.castrone@pressdemocrat.com](mailto:linda.castrone@pressdemocrat.com) or 521-5235.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Moments in Sonoma County's past

**Dec. 21, 1989:** In response to the Nov. 9 opening of the Berlin Wall, Occidental wreath-maker Ben Gonnella hatched a plan to deck the wall with boughs of Sonoma County holly. With help from the Salvation Army, Lufthansa Airlines and area residents, 24 holiday wreaths, a 75-foot garland and local greetings were delivered to the wall.

**Dec. 24, 1959:** Sonoma solved its problem of "surplus ducks" in the plaza by providing the Salvation Army's Christmas table with 20 duck dinners. A spokesman for City Hall said that if the population was not thinned down, "before long the plaza could very well be smothered in ducks."

— Teresa Meikle & Janet Balicki, *Press Democrat* Research

### CONVERSATIONS

Reader comments from [towns.pressdemocrat.com](http://towns.pressdemocrat.com)

**Posted Nov. 27:** The Weinstein Relief Station, Guerneville's shiny new two-stall, graffiti-proof restroom, was opened. The project took eight years and used \$250,000 in redevelopment funds. Supervisor Efren Carrillo was among those who attended the ribbon cutting.

**From Ron Judge:** OK, who wants to GO first?

**From B:** I hear this is going to be Efren's local campaign headquarters!

**From Alice McGuire:** For \$250,000, you could build a new home, and that includes the land. But when it comes to "redevelopment funds" (taxpayer money), the sky's the limit.

**From Michele May:** This part of the county has enough lack of money problems . . . all that money was spent on a bathroom for the public. What public, the tourist???

**From April:** The new public bathroom will provide a sanitary location for those who need it instead of using the nearest bush or parking lot. I am pretty sure everyone benefits from that, right?

**From April:** When you gotta go, you gotta go. Times are hard, and it's mighty cold outside. Have a heart, think about others and stop being judgmental.

Join the conversation at [towns.pressdemocrat.com](http://towns.pressdemocrat.com).

**"Our business client was thrilled to turn their water thirsty lawn into an award winning drought tolerant outdoor events center."**

Mike Cook, Vice President of a local landscape architecture firm, assisted his client to participate in the City of Sonoma's Cash for Grass Rebate Program. The rebate program helps not only homeowners, but commercial properties to replace lawns with low water use plants and upgrade irrigation with water efficient hardware.

Learn more at [www.savingwaterpartnership.org](http://www.savingwaterpartnership.org) or call 707.547.1933.



# WINDSOR

windsor.towns.pressdemocrat.com

## THE WEEK Windsor

Today is the last day to take advantage of the **Old Downtown Windsor Santa Shop**, 513 David Clayton Lane. Take a photo with Santa from 3 to 7 p.m., with proceeds from photo sales benefiting the Windsor Educational Foundation. Gift wrapping and craft sales will be available for a donation from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Information: Dennis, 483-7322.

Café Noto hosts its annual **Gingerbread House building** today, with participants constructing dwellings from gingerbread and candy. \$35, sign up in advance at 836-1830. The cafe is at 630 McClelland Drive.

The last **Windsor Farmers Market** of the season is today, with raffles at 1 p.m. benefitting the Windsor Service Alliance. Information: 838-1320 or windsorfarmersmarket.com.

Dress warmly for the traditional **"La Posada"** procession on the Town Green, recalling Mary and Joseph's search for a room. It begins at 6 p.m. Monday at the Shiloh Covenant Church, 251 Windsor River Road, and is followed by food and indoor activities. Information: 836-0100.

### Christmas Eve services include:

■ **Covenant Fellowship Presbyterian Church** (The Cove), 4:30 p.m. 5146 Old Redwood Hwy., Santa Rosa. 526-7711.

■ **Mark West Neighborhood Church**, 6 p.m. 5901 Old Redwood Hwy., Santa Rosa. 838-9136.

■ **Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church**, 4 p.m. Children's liturgy in English, 6:30 p.m. Liturgy in Spanish, 9 p.m. Liturgy in English. 8400 Old Redwood Hwy., 837-8962.

■ **Windsor Community United Methodist Church**, 7 p.m. 9451 Brooks Road S. 838-6898

■ **Windsor Presbyterian Church**, 5:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. 5900 Pruitt Ave. 838-1566.

— Diana Gilbert

# Science class with the roof off

Windsor Oaks students wander fields and farms to get up close with nature

By **DIANA GILBERT**

WINDSOR CORRESPONDENT

**T** Tyler Ross, 15, spent a recent school day in an unusual sort of classroom, at Martorana Family Winery in Healdsburg. His assignment for the day?

First, build an owl box, used by wineries to attract the natural predators of a variety of destructive rodents. Later, visit a restoration project at Grape Creek and help introduce plants that aid in bank stabilization.

Tyler and six other students at Windsor Oaks Academy are among a select group of 32 from six county high schools who are enrolled in this year's Farming and Resource Management for Sustainability (FARMS) program. Put on by the Sonoma County Resource Conservation District, the program's goal is to "empower and enrich their lives through the environment and through teaching them about sustainable agriculture," said Susan Haydon, who is the education program manager.

"When we do that, we touch on themes of their own health, their own adulthood and the choices they make," she said. "We hope to teach them a sense of place. It's all about caring for the land, and local farms are our classroom and our laboratory."

Throughout the academic year, students participate in seven field days, keep notebooks about their activities and do pre- and post-assessments to measure what they've learned. The course culminates with two days of presentations at Sonoma County Ag Days.

"I wanted to do this because I'm a hands-on person," said Tyler. "I prefer being outside to sitting inside a classroom doing nothing."

Hands-on certainly describes the activities students participate in. In September they picked apples in Sebastopol and used them to make apple juice. At Petaluma's Bounty Farm, they helped with a natural weed abatement and soil restoration



JOHN BURGESS / The Press Democrat

**Windsor Oaks Academy sophomore Kristina Rodriguez, 16, and senior Joe Hammer, 18, build an owl box at Martorana Family Winery in the Dry Creek Valley.**

program.

Later in the year they'll plant native trees and plants at Cresta Ranch near Mark West Springs, learn to spin yarn from animal hair at Windrush Farms in Chileno Valley and taste homemade cheese and yogurt at Triple-C organic dairy near Two Rock.

About half the student body at Windsor Oaks Academy applied for this unique academic program, which counts as an elective and meets state science standards.

"Prior knowledge about agriculture or an interest in pursuing an agricultural career are not factors in the application process. Genuine interest is," said Haydon.

Tyler's classmate Kristina Rodriguez, 16, has been pleasantly surprised by the types of things she has gotten to do. "I really enjoyed picking apples and making juice at the apple orchard," she said. "It tasted a lot better than store-bought juice. It's so fresh. I've always liked being in nature but I've never done anything like this."

Windsor Oaks teacher Jeremiah Kahmoson accompanies the

students to each of the field day activities and is a strong proponent of FARMS.

"I'm really passionate about the environment," he said. "We all live downstream' is the motto in my classroom. This is an amazing opportunity to take students into an environment that they're not used to and give them an experience they haven't had. What a perfect way to learn by doing."

He believes that the alternative curriculum is especially beneficial for students from his school.

"A lot of the students we have in alternative education at Windsor Oaks are there because they don't fit the mold of traditional book- and text- oriented learning styles," he said.

"It's important for our students to know that they're part of this community. They do an amazing job working with the other students, and they're proud that their school has been part of the FARMS program longer than any other."

Beyond earning academic credits or even learning something about caring for the envi-

ronment, Kahmoson sees long-term benefits, too.

"They get to see the larger picture," Kahmoson said. "Most teenagers are focused on the here and the now. These guys get the idea that there are things bigger than themselves, and that they can still be a part of it."

Funding for the program comes from private and public sources including Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District.

As money for electives evaporates in public schools, the Conservation District works to ensure that participating students and schools incur no costs.

Haydon said she thinks the cost and energy it takes to put the program together are worth it in the long run, both for the students and the community as a whole.

"This is a time when high school students are making decisions about college and their next steps in life and careers. . . . We're trying to give back to our own Sonoma County youth by giving them an awareness of and appreciation for the working landscape."

## COMMUNITY

Jose Castaneda's Big Idea

Jose Castaneda of Castaneda's Marketplace on Old Redwood Highway recently made a YouTube video to attract customers not just to his store, but to all local businesses.

Castaneda said he made the video "out of a sense of desperation

and obligation."

"I wanted to try something new that would inspire people to look at the slogan 'Shop Local' in a slightly different way — a way that would result in action," he said.

Castaneda added that while lo-

cal businesses can't always compete on selection or price, they support local schools and organizations. "We make a difference where we live," he said.

You can check out Castaneda's video at <http://bit.ly/tEUIrJ>.

**"Don't wait for people to be friendly, show them how".**  
— Author Unknown

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