

# MARTINEZ NEWS-GAZETTE

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## Martinez honors its creek with historical spotlight

Historical Society,  
area schools to  
present an oral history  
next week at library

BY IRENE PARK  
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Martinez' beloved Alhambra Creek will receive another day in the spotlight, this time showcased for history and nature lovers alike.

At 7 p.m. on Jan. 29, the Martinez Library will be the stage for an oral history project presentation, a tribute to the Creek's running legacy. Highlighting the Creek's intrinsic value to Martinez will be various organizations, including the Martinez Historical Society and two schools: Briones High School's Environmental Studies Academy and John Swett Elementary School.

"The Oral History Project of Martinez and Alhambra Creek Watershed" finds its roots with the Watershed Preservation Project. The original concept was to document the Creek over the years by interviewing long-time Martineziens who have lived along the Creek, according to Project Interviewer Cathy Pardieck.

However, as project partici-

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## CREEK

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pants began to interview various residents, they soon discovered a vast and rich history expressed in people's memories that they couldn't bear to omit.

"We realized we can't just limit it to the people who lived along the creek. We also wanted to expand it to people who have lived in Martinez for a long time," Pardieck said.

And so flourished the ambitious endeavor. Lisa Anich from the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District applied for a grant that eventually funded the purchase of recording equipment, including cameras and lights. Volunteers from organizations including Friends of Alhambra Creek and the Alhambra Valley Creek Coalition began to donate their time and efforts in interviewing the older Martinez community.

Most importantly, students also joined in on the journey back into history.

"My students were able to participate in their community in a way that brought history alive for them," said Rona Zollinger, the ESA instructor.

"We're bringing together three or more generations here, that's been one of the favorite parts for me," said Pardieck.

While the project is nowhere near final, Tuesday's presentation will include a 10-minute collection of clips from the interviews

recorded thus far. Student presentations will also take place, with the ESA speaking about their participation in the project, and John Swett Elementary sharing the results of their own family history projects.

"I think it's interesting for people to compare themselves with people who lived in Martinez in the past," said Anich. "I just hope an appreciation for the wonderful partnerships in the Martinez communities [is fostered], and also we hope it will spark an interest, and we'll have volunteers with different areas of additional interest beyond the environmental."

"There's a lot of history out there, we've just begun," said Pardieck. "People used to throw in tires and shopping carts and now they don't, now they respect the creek. This is progress."