



Dear friends and neighbors,

Driving by a very full Nicasio Reservoir on the way to Inverness the other day we could not help but appreciate how lucky we are starting the new year with our reservoirs at over 80% of capacity. A good story to savor for this past year, along with the absence of catastrophic local fires. Nature has been kind to us here. Let's hope for more of the same in 2024!



As for the rest, we will hold our breath and hope for good news in 2024. On the home front we look forward to starting the year off with lots of village opportunities for getting together, as we so enjoy the sense of community our village connections offer. Thank you for that.

## **THE PLAZA GATHERING**

**Yes...we are doing it again**

**and again, and again, every Third Thursday!!!**

**MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS, FRIENDS,  
FRIENDS OF FRIENDS**

**At the Depot Plaza  
4pm on Thursday, January 18th**

Fingers crossed for some good weather this month so we can meet up again downtown. Members, volunteers, friends, friends of friends are all invited to join us each Third Thursday. We meet on the plaza at the picnic tables at 4pm to hang out, have a little snack and chat, meeting new people and seeing Village friends in person. **AND if it is rainy, look for us inside the Depot Cafe!**

Please BYOB (Bring Your Own Beverage) and join us on the plaza Thursday, January 18th at 4pm. Feel free to bring friends to introduce them to the village. We are a welcoming bunch. See you then.

**Join Us at The Cantina**  
**Monday, January 22nd at 1pm**



We hope you will join us for our next Fourth Monday Lunch, January 22nd, when we return to a local favorite, **The Cantina**. We have been here many times before and thoroughly appreciate their warm welcome, wide variety of lunch options and easy parking. Contact Cathy Dunlap (415-608-8175 or [millvalleyvillagenews@gmail.com](mailto:millvalleyvillagenews@gmail.com)) no later than the week before so she can make sure there are enough seats reserved for all. See further details in the listing of events at the end of the newsletter.

**Another Holiday Short: *Fuzzy Feelings***  
**With a Behind-the-Scenes Introduction**



In doing a periodic check of a favorite website ([www.thisiscolossal.com](http://www.thisiscolossal.com)) I came across this film as well as a description of the behind-the-scenes process of creating it, on an iPhone no less. Here is the introduction that caught my eye:

“Karma comes quickly for the Scrooge-esque character in Anna Mantzaris’ *Fuzzy Feelings*, a touching stop-motion animation about loneliness and compassion. A holiday ad for Apple that’s set to George Harrison’s *Isn’t It a Pity*, the short film features the Swedish animator’s signature felted cast, particularly a gruff, selfish man who steals change from a charity and experiences fast retribution. As we soon learn, though, that character mirrors the curmudgeonly boss of a young woman, who’s created the fictional scenes to take revenge on her superior. The story turns heartwarming when the woman realizes that her boss is alone for the holidays and uses her animated characters to remedy the problem.

One particularly appealing aspect of this short film is the delightful use of George Harrison’s *Isn’t it a Pity*. The lyrics are shown on the screen and they are perfect. To watch the completed ad [click here](#) but be sure to take a look at the [the behind-the-scenes video](#), a fascinating brief dive into what goes into such a complex art form.

## Recently Watched and Recommended

### *The Swimmers*



As the film opens it is 2011, and we are shown an idyllic scene of families enjoying themselves in and around a sparkling pool on a beautiful sunny day. We are in a suburb of Damascus, Syria, where sisters Yusra and Sara Mardini live with their parents and their younger sister. It is the same year that a civil uprising calling for liberal reforms against the government of Bashar al-Assad began. As one reviewer writes “There’s a painful sense of normalcy to this sequence, knowing what will happen to Syria in the next few years.”

We move forward to 2015, and the country is now in the midst of a full civil war. The spread and intensity of fighting have led to a dire humanitarian crisis with millions internally displaced or seeking refuge in neighboring countries. It is against this backdrop that we meet up again with Yusra and Sara Mardini (played by sisters Nathalie and Manal Issa). Both girls are now accomplished competitive swimmers and Yusra, now 17, is training for the 2016 Olympics. What follows is the story of the sister’s decision to undertake the daunting and dangerous journey from Syria to Germany joining the millions of Syrians who have preceded them.

*“The Swimmers is a touching portrait of their fight to survive and achieve the impossible. The script...does not soften the danger or hardships the sisters face...yet it keeps its central characters grounded in hope and reality. The two sisters argue, make mistakes, and are too hard on themselves, but that’s what makes the story so compelling. They were regular teenagers thrown into extraordinary circumstances.” - RogerEbert.com*

*“The Swimmers is an incredible cinematic journey that beautifully captures the resilience of the human spirit and the power of determination. From the very first scene the audience is drawn into the captivating narrative of these remarkable sisters. Their journey is not just a physical one but a deeply emotional and inspiring one as well. As they navigate through adversity their unwavering spirit and sheer determination become a source of inspiration that resonates with viewers of all ages.” - Rotten Tomatoes*

This film caught our attention immediately and held it throughout. Based on a true story, it is available on Netflix. And [here](#) is the official trailer to give you an idea of what awaits you.

**Pan American Unity:  
A Mural by Diego Rivera at SFMOMA  
Closing January 28th**



This is a spectacular mural and worth a special trip to see if you haven't already. After being on display now for several years, the exhibit is closing January 28th. Although there are plans for it to be on display in a new purpose-built location at City College of San Francisco, that will be several years in the future. So now is the time. Below is some background about the mural's creation from the SFMOMA website:

In June of 1940, Diego Rivera returned to San Francisco to headline the main fine arts exhibition of the Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island. Working on a scaffold in an airplane hangar before a live audience, Rivera painted *The Marriage of the Artistic Expression of the North and the South on This Continent*, commonly known as *Pan American Unity*, his last mural in the U.S. Completed with support from local artists, with scenes of the Bay Area as backdrop, the mural celebrates the creative spirit through portraits of artists, artisans, architects and inventors who use art and technology as tools to shape society.

After the fair, *Pan American Unity*, measuring twenty-two by seventy-four feet and weighing over sixty thousand pounds was moved to the City College of San Francisco. This was possible because Rivera painted the fresco not on a wall, but on ten steel-framed cement panels. More than half a century later an international team of experts spent years planning another move...to SFMOMA.

The fresco (a mural painted on wet plaster) was commissioned by the WPA (Works Progress Administration). The plan at the time was to move it to City College to be the focal point of a new campus library to be designed by Pflueger, the famed architect of skyscrapers and movie palaces. But the library was never built and the mural stayed in storage at CCSF for 20 years until it was installed on the back wall of the Diego Rivera Theatre building completed in 1961. And there it stayed for 60 years, in a lobby "too small to step back and study its scope and grandeur". In 2021, the theater building closed permanently so it could be replaced and the mural was trucked to SFMOMA as a main attraction when the museum reopened after the long COVID-19 lockdown. The mural has resided since then in SFMOMA's free-to-the-public Roberts Family gallery on Floor 1, where it will remain ONLY until January 28th. The plan is for the mural to be stored until the new Diego Rivera Theater, it's future home back at CCSF, is completed. So now is the opportune time to see this gorgeous masterpiece. Whether you see this work in person or in photos, there is a terrific audio tour of the mural available on the SFMOMA site



(<https://www.sfmoma.org/exhibition/pan-american-unity/>). There are also some great photos of the mural if a trip to San Francisco is not on the horizon.



## Events for January

We hope you will join us at one or more of the Mill Valley Village activities listed below. You can also find these events on our website at [www.mvvalley.org](http://www.mvvalley.org) under either the **Events** or **Calendar** tab. If you know a friend who would like to get our newsletter we hope you will let them know we would be happy to add them to our email list. To request to be sent our once-a-month email newsletter just send us a note at the following email address: [millvalleyvillageprograms@gmail.com](mailto:millvalleyvillageprograms@gmail.com).

### **Mondays, January 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29, “Back Before Lunch Hikes”, 9am**

These hikes, aimed at those looking for a shorter hiking option than our Friday hikes, have typically been 3.5 to 5 miles long, with an elevation gain of 600-800 feet and lasting about 2 hours. The group meets early Monday mornings and is “back before lunch”. The hike is very popular, not only for the wonderful hiking venues but for the connections forged on the trail. Sara Byruck is the long-time group coordinator and hike leader. For more information or to get on Sara’s email list contact her at [sbyruck@gmail.com](mailto:sbyruck@gmail.com).

### **Mondays, January 1 and 15, Storytelling Workshops, 2pm**

Interested in tackling a story or memoir in a small group format with other villagers? Aspiring writers, seasoned veterans and those somewhere in between are welcome. We gather twice per month for 90 minutes to read aloud short selections from our works in progress, followed by discussion, quiet writing time and more sharing. Prompts are provided to those looking to jumpstart their creative juices! The group meets the first and third Mondays of each month from 2:00 to 3:30. Please email Cindy at [Cindy@theygybe.net](mailto:Cindy@theygybe.net) for questions and further details.

### **Tuesday, January 2, Recent Articles Group, 10:10am**

Do you sometimes read a great article and want to discuss it with interesting Villagers? Join the Recent Articles Group on the first Tuesday of the month from 10:10 to 11:30. We explore any topic except politics and religion. For details contact Sue Steele ([xerty.10@gmail.com](mailto:xerty.10@gmail.com) or 415-388-7832).

### **Tuesday, January 2, Caregiving and Family - Challenges and Rewards, 1pm**

Are you caring for a family member or friend? This group meets the first Tuesday of the month at a home near downtown Mill Valley. First convened in early 2015, the group has as its goal providing ‘support that recognizes one’s inner strengths and resiliency, no matter the circumstances’. If such a group might appeal to you, villagers are invited to

contact Sara Byruck ([sbyruck@gmail.com](mailto:sbyruck@gmail.com) or 617-599-8116). Sara would be delighted to chat with you to see if it feels right. Give her a call.

**Tuesdays, January 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30, Knitting and Needlework Group, 3pm**

Have a knitting or needlework project you would like to undertake in the company of friends? If so this group might be for you. We meet weekly to discuss potential projects, enjoy each other's company and encourage each other as progress is made. Beginners are welcome. Mill Valley Village members and volunteers, as well as those interested in finding out more about the village, are welcome to contact Sara Byruck (617-599-8116 or [sbyruck@gmail.com](mailto:sbyruck@gmail.com)) for more information.

**Wednesdays, January 3 and 17, Men's Coffee, 11:30am**

This is an informal gathering with no particular agenda beyond the company of friends. We encourage you, whether a volunteer or member, to come join in. The group meets at restaurants and coffee shops around Mill Valley twice a month. To get more information or to be put on the reminder list for upcoming meetings contact Irv Gubman (415-250-6155 or [irvgubman@gmail.com](mailto:irvgubman@gmail.com)). The group meets the first and third Wednesdays at 11:30am.

**Wednesday, January 3, Movie Group, 4pm**

Once a month we get together via Zoom to meet, greet, enjoy each other's company and talk about that month's selected movie. In advance, we watch the movie and then talk about what struck us about it, what we liked (or not), what it made us think about, remember or yearn for...and on and on. Mill Valley Village volunteers and members who are interested in joining this group, please contact Seela Lewis ([seelalewis@gmail.com](mailto:seelalewis@gmail.com)).

**Fridays, January 5, 12, 19 and 26, Hiking Group, 9am**

Our hiking group is for serious hikers wishing to spend the day on the wonderful trails of Marin County. Hikes are scheduled weekly on Fridays and vary from moderate to strenuous. We take 45-60 minute lunch breaks with some of the most beautiful views around. What a great way to get some good healthy exercise and get to know your Village neighbors better! If you are interested in joining us on the trail please contact Julian Brandes ([jjb94941@gmail.com](mailto:jjb94941@gmail.com) or 415-845-8392) for more information.

**Wednesday, January 10, Coffee at the Sweetwater, 10:30am**

Please join us at our monthly get-togethers the second Wednesdays at 10:30 in the Sweetwater Music Hall. It is a casual plan, you come and go as you have time, sit and chat with friends and meet new ones, peruse the "lending library" for books to borrow and generally catch up with other villagers. If you are new to the village it is a great opportunity to get to meet other villagers. Or if you have only heard about the village and would like to know more, dropping by is an easy way to put a toe in the water. You are welcome to bring your own "cuppa" as the cafe is not open, although a pot of coffee and donuts are provided.

**Thursdays, January 11 and 25, James Joyce's *Ulysses* Book Group, 2pm**

This group of Mill Valley members and volunteers, led by Michael Sheiner, a long-time village volunteer, meets twice monthly (second and fourth Thursdays) near downtown Mill Valley to discuss what has been read since the last meeting. Given the length of this book, Michael expects the group to meet for over a year. There is room for a few more readers so if you are interested please email her at [mks16@pacbell.net](mailto:mks16@pacbell.net).

**Tuesday, January 16, Third Tuesday Book Club, 1pm**

This recently inaugurated book club, led by Beth Brandes ([brb94941@gmail.com](mailto:brb94941@gmail.com)) and Carolyn Burwell ([carburwell@gmail.com](mailto:carburwell@gmail.com)), meets monthly on the third Tuesday of the month. Like the "Third Thursday Book Club", it is kept small to encourage discussion and camaraderie, and is currently full. When openings become available that opportunity will be posted in the newsletter.

**Wednesday, January 17, Third Wednesday Walkers, 10am**

We hold 2 - 3 mile flat terrain walks and/or excursions in varied places of interest, urban or rural, ocean or mountain, often carpooling to destinations and staying for lunch at local restaurants. We love to "get outta town"...but mostly within 20 to 40 minutes' drive, or ferry or bus or train ride. Gathering in Mill Valley at 9:30 or 10 am we are usually home by 2. For more information or to get on the list to be sent details one week before the walk, contact Karen Robbins ([karobbins@comcast.net](mailto:karobbins@comcast.net) or 415-519-3420).

**Thursday, January 18, Third Thursday Book Club, 1pm**

This long-running monthly book club led by Ginnie Job continues to meet on the third Thursday of each month. Both book clubs, for local village volunteers and members, are kept small to encourage discussion and camaraderie, and are currently full. When openings become available they will be posted in the newsletter. For questions regarding the Third Thursday Book Club please contact Ginnie Job ([ginniejob4@gmail.com](mailto:ginniejob4@gmail.com)).

**Thursday, January 18, GATHERING ON THE PLAZA, 4pm**

Members, volunteers, friends, friends of friends and curious passers-by are invited to join us at the picnic tables on the Plaza to hang out, have a little snack, get outta the house, meet new people and see Village friends in person. This is a **BYOB** event so bring your favorite beverage (and friends) and come join us. We'll be looking for you!

**Monday, January 22, Lunch at The Cantina, 1pm**

This month we return to an old favorite, **The Cantina**, and hope you will join us. The plan is simple, you bring cash, order what you want, and we add it up, calculate tax and tip and make change. Contact Cathy Dunlap ([millvalleyvillagenews@gmail.com](mailto:millvalleyvillagenews@gmail.com) or 415-608-8175) as soon as you know you can come, but no later than the week before so she can make sure there are enough seats reserved for all. Looking forward to seeing you there.

**Until next YEAR, stay well.  
We look forward to seeing you soon.**

