

The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

oh, why not?

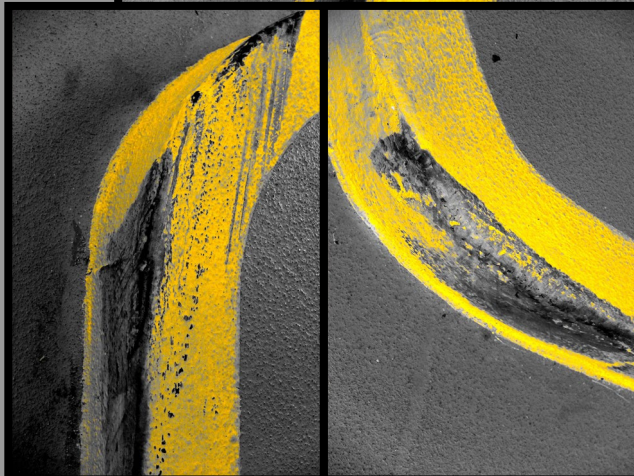
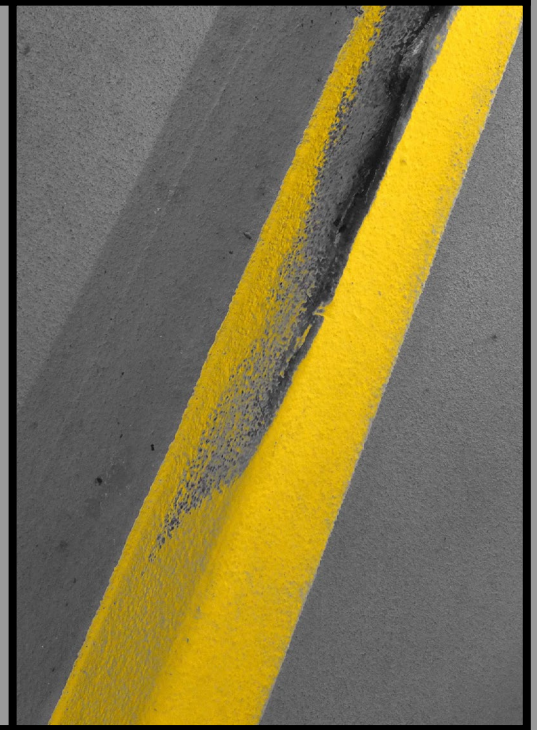
August 15, 2019

Today I attended Open Studios Day in the underground venues of the Montebello Curbists. With their concrete canvas and Michelin brushes, these artists work untirelessly at what they refer to as curbed expressionism. Unhampered by their



limited palette, limited talent, and unlimited cheap wine, these devoted drivers painting under the influence (PUI) have produced these provocative statements.

—Joel Miller



Le noir est le nouveau jaune

China Garden becomes Family Fortune

By Amy Friedlander

I recently bought food from the Family Fortune Restaurant and they told me that they are the former owners of the China Garden Restaurant (now called Ken's Bistro) on Huntington Avenue, pretty much across the street from the Huntington Metro station.

Family Fortune

2913-B Arlington Drive

Mount Vernon Square Shopping Center

Alexandria, VA 22306

(703) 768-1111 (703) 768-1716

<https://www.familyfortune-va.com/>

E-recycling this Friday

By Sophie and Sarah Myers

Our next recycling date is Friday, August 16. We are available to pick up items from your units on Thursday, between 7 and 8:30 p.m.

If you are not available at that time, you may leave the items in front of your door and we will pick them up that evening, or you are welcome to drop them off at our unit 2-615. Please make sure they are clearly marked with your name and unit number.

We accept all electronic and hazardous household items that Fairfax County recycles (and that fit in our van): electronics such as computers, TVs, phones, printers, cords, and fluorescent light bulbs, rechargeable batteries (not alkaline, which must be disposed of in the trash), paint, solvents, articles that contain mercury, fire extinguishers, and aerosol cans. For hazardous items, please make sure items are sealed and content is marked. See Fairfax County Rules: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/residential-materials>.

To sign up, contact us at montebello_cycles@icloud.com and please specify your unit number. 📧



Will Jarred, director of The Savannah Disputation at Little Theatre of Alexandria, with the Ruby Griffith Award for Outstanding Achievement in a Play

– Scott Compton

Fall Montebello bowling

The Monday and Wednesday Montebello Bowling Leagues are looking to add players on both nights. Male and female bowlers are needed and welcome. No experience necessary! Seriously, no experience is necessary. Can you smile? You can bowl! It's as simple as that. Used to bowl many years ago? You can still do it. We can even arrange for a refresher session or lesson. Shoes and balls are provided if you don't have your own. It's a handicap league so it doesn't matter if you bowl a 60 or a 300, there is a spot for you. Just call Mark Woods at 703 498 0143 or email at mjddwoods@earthlink.net. The leagues start right after Labor Day so do it now while you are thinking about it. – Mark Woods 📧

Quotable

"If you never take any risks, nothing very bad and nothing very good will probably happen to you."

– fortune cookie message

– Carole Appel

The **MONTEBELLO** **Voice**
 an independent gazette
 Alexandria, Virginia

This publication accepts no funding or oversight from advertisers, residents, or the Montebello Condominium Unit Owners Association. All opinions are encouraged and reflect the diversity of views in the community. All articles and photographs come from Montebello residents. To receive or contribute to this email-only gazette, contact montebellovoice@cox.net or visit on the web at www.montebellovoice.com.

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Chopp'd

voices on the 37

By Holden Coy via Facebook

It was very disheartening to see that the beautiful scented bushes on either side of the driveway into the parking lot between Bldg 1 and rear gate – along with some over on the Village Green – were destroyed [on July 11], and now we are left with dirt and stubs. I will miss their wonderful, sweet aroma and the soft green buffer they provided.

Response from the office: “Those plants are Russian Olive and is an invasive plant. We had to remove them as they were impeding traffic and was a safety issue with the pedestrian walkway. We will be doing replanting that area with input from the Grounds Committee.”

Catherine Cooke wrote: “I really believe we have gone bonkers over all these ‘invasive’ plants and yet we have poison ivy adorning the pool! I loved smelling those bushes and this makes me extremely sad. How can these bushes harm us? I was also very saddened to see all the beautiful irises dug up this fall on the hill to buildings 1 and 2. I suppose we must spend every dime in collected condo fees to justify future increase.” 🙄

B-I-N-G-O at Montebello.

Photo by Dian McDonald



According to Wikipedia, *Elaeagnus angustifolia*, commonly called Russian olive, silver berry, oleaster, Persian olive, or wild olive, is a species of *Elaeagnus*, native to western and central Asia, Afghanistan, from southern Russia and Kazakhstan to Turkey, Iran, and parts of Pakistan. It is now also widely established in North America as an introduced species. *E. angustifolia* is widely grown across southern and central Europe as a drought-resistant ornamental plant for its scented flowers, edible fruit, attractive yellow foliage, and black bark.

The species was introduced into North America in the late 19th century, and subsequently escaped cultivation, because its fruits are relished by birds, who disperse the seeds. Russian olive is considered to be an invasive species in many places in the United States because it thrives on poor soil, has low seedling mortality rates, matures in a few years, and outcompetes wild native vegetation. It often invades riparian habitats where overstory cottonwoods have died. – MK 🙄



Lessons learned: A stairway to...?

By Harriet Duval

Montbello is my home. I love the diversity and interesting neighbors as well as our beautiful grounds. I support projects to improve the erosion in the woodlands. These are a few of the reasons I try to stay involved and be aware of what is going on. Yet, a recent structure built behind my building just appeared: a level plateau has been added to the dog walk path behind building one. I was told it would have a bench and new landscaping. During the construction period there was a pile of very

curiosity led me to walk down the new steps. To my great surprise, they go nowhere, just down the hill in the woods, and abruptly stop into dirt.

[Project description and costs are in the April 23 board packet on page 22 at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DoNUnyHtq0nXT-LUN0kYo5g5RgUqj748k8/view>, ed.]

Prior to asking the question at the recent board meeting with regard to the steps, I asked several neighbors who walk the woods, who walk their dogs, and who have been involved with the landscape project. The majority of the responses were very similar: “where are

sometime in the future. ???

My intent is not to criticize, just the opposite. Hopefully, this will encourage residents to become involved, to ask questions, to read articles, and to respond to surveys.

Montebello is going through several major changes for a variety of reasons. Rather than criticize the results, **please participate, voice your questions and opinions prior to decisions.** What is decided today will impact the future of **our community.** No one person can know everything, (lesson learned), but greater resident



Steps range in height from 3.5 to 5.25 inches



No discernible path is visible past the steps, the area is surrounded by large boulders.

large stones. I wrongly assumed it was to be the flooring of the new sitting area. A few days ago, next to the new area enlarged area covered in mulch appeared a beautiful staircase built with the large stones. The wide steps lead to the woodlands where I often walk. My

the steps?”, “don’t know,” “additional paths,” and “a path to building 5.”

I am a regular attendee at meetings and events, yet I was surprised not knowing about the steps behind the building in which I live. I was told that the steps will eventually lead to a path

involvement will provide increased opportunity to share information and lead to informed and amicable decisions as we move forward. 🏡

Major concerns with Reserve Balance require cuts to the CC renovation proposal

By Brian Goldberg

President Kandel’s article in the August *Times of Montebello* raises serious concerns about the Reserve Balance over the ensuing 5 years. For reasons explained below, we **must** cut back on the exorbitance currently being proposed for the Community Center (CC) renovation, with estimated costs for that project soaring to \$7.2 million, which would consume nearly 82% of what the Reserve Balance is projected to be at the start of 2020. Without cuts to expenditures, **the currently proposed condo fee increase for next year is 6.95%**, and the condo fees are projected to increase by at least **6%** per year for the following 6 years by conservative estimates (based on increases to Reserve contributions, increases in labor/overhead costs, and inflation), so that by 2026 the condo fees would be at least **50%** higher than they are today:

Unit Type	2019 Monthly	2020 Monthly	2020 Annual	2026 Monthly
A/AA	491.67	525.84	6310.09	745.92
B	581.31	621.71	7460.53	881.91
C	604.39	646.40	7756.74	916.92
D	647.89	692.92	8315.02	982.92
E	671.03	717.67	8612.00	1018.02
EE	844.54	903.24	10838.83	1281.26
F	691.32	739.37	8872.40	1048.81
G	754.82	807.28	9687.36	1145.14
H	882.18	943.49	11321.90	1338.36
J	980.47	1048.61	12583.35	1487.48

*Projections based on current estimates

Due primarily to the high projected cost of the CC renovation, the annual increase in contribution to the Reserve Fund is proposed to go from an increase of \$200,000/year to \$300,000/year (as well as increasing the contribution to the Contingency Fund from \$100,000/year to \$150,000/year), which directly results in an approximate 3+% increase in condo fees each year on its own. In justifying condo fee increases in the December 2017 issue of *The Times*, the Treasurer stated that “the result of not increasing the reserve contribution would be contrary to the board’s policy of maintaining a minimum unencumbered reserve balance of \$4 million.” That policy still exists (AR-76 established in 2012) and the Board will be required to vote to make an exception or amendment to it. Without cutting expenditures like the CC renovation, to maintain a Reserve Balance of \$4 million would require an increase in condo fees of more than 20%!

TABLE 4
CASH FLOW SUMMARY
(Current Funding)

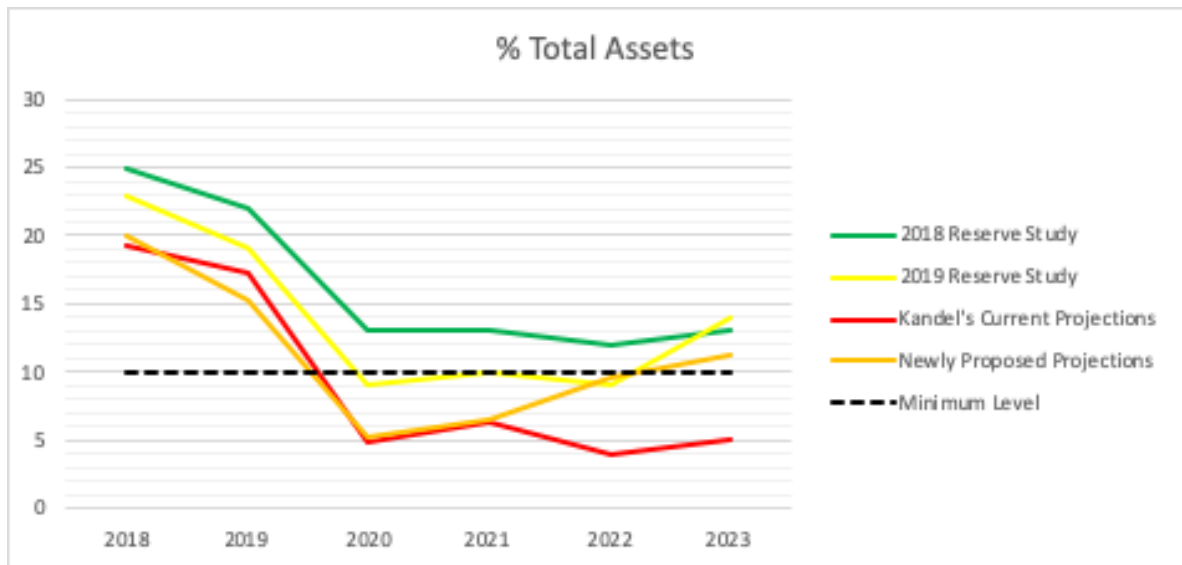
MONTEBELLO CONDOMINIUM								
Initial Contribution: \$2,470,000			Begin Study Period: 2018			End Study Period: 2037		
Projected Increase: \$175,000(2018)			\$200,000 to 2037			v9		
Beginning Balance \$10,712,377								
Year	Reserve Component Value	Beginning Reserve Balance	Yearly Contribution	Component Method Contribution	Interest Paid On Reserve Balance	Capital Expenditure	Ending Reserve Balance	% Total Assets
2018	\$40,586,176	\$10,712,377	\$2,470,000	\$10,705,396	\$74,879	\$3,224,500	\$10,032,756	25%
2019	\$42,615,485	\$10,032,756	\$2,670,000	\$8,204,751	\$64,307	\$3,602,025	\$9,165,038	22%
2020	\$44,746,259	\$9,165,038	\$2,870,000	\$5,658,526	\$29,343	\$6,230,779	\$5,833,602	13%
2021	\$46,983,572	\$5,833,602	\$3,070,000	\$5,298,674	\$30,408	\$2,792,770	\$6,141,240	13%
2022	\$49,332,751	\$6,141,240	\$3,270,000	\$4,825,569	\$23,884	\$3,752,876	\$5,682,248	12%
2023	\$51,799,388	\$5,682,248	\$3,470,000	\$4,761,977	\$33,645	\$2,317,727	\$6,868,166	13%

money matters

We are already seeing the consequences of the tenuous financial position brought on by the rising CC renovation budget. At the August Board meeting, Treasurer Tom Harrelson stated that “dark clouds are forming on the horizon.” [See his report on the next page, ed.] Management and the Board are now planning to delay replacement of the Rooftop Air Handling Units, which had been identified for replacement this year, until 2021, despite significant mechanical failures last summer and difficulty in obtaining parts that are no longer produced. With such a low Reserve Fund balance, we could be one major system breakdown away from needing a special assessment, which has never occurred at Montebello and is something I’ve heard many speaking about with pride. Unforeseen expenses are likely in buildings that are 35 years old, even with prudent maintenance; and having Reserve Balances as low as \$2-3 million seems imprudent (not to mention against previously stated Board policy), given the strong financial situation in which we are currently situated, especially if some significant unforeseen expenses come to fruition.

Just as recently as 2018, the projected Cash Flow Summary in the Reserve Study was as follows:

This Cash Flow Summary was based on a more reasonable CC renovation budget of \$5 million in 2018 dollars (~\$5.5 million in 2020 dollars). You’ll note from the chart above that the ending Reserve Balance each year satisfies the recommended minimum level of 10% for the “% of Total Assets,” which is standard financial guidance included by the firm hired to provide our Reserve Study. Even in the updated Reserve Study for 2019, the ending Reserve Balance each year was not projected to fall below \$4 million or below 9% of Total Assets. By contrast, the *Times* article shows that the current projections are for the Reserve Balance to fall as low as \$2 million, and would fall well below the minimum level of 10% of Total Assets



for 2020-2023 (see graph below).

In the publication justifying the CC Renovation costs, the Board indicated that with a very conservative approach to estimating, the total cost in 2020 dollars would not exceed \$6.9 million and would likely be less, but we are now looking at a projected cost of \$7.2 million with warnings it could increase due to material costs. In that same publication, the Board also stated the “lowest end-of-year reserve balance is projected to be \$3,760,274” and “by 2023 the year-end [reserve] balance climbs to over \$6,000,000” – both of which have turned out to be false (lowest reserve balance now estimated to be \$2-\$2.5 million and the only way to get to that 2023 year-end balance is a greater than 6% increase in condo dues each year).

These low Reserve Balances are primarily a direct result of the ever-increasing projected costs of the CC renovation; and each approved contract for other projects that has exceeded the cost projections in the Reserve Study also contributes to

Project	Reserve Study Budget	Actual Budget	Overage
Fire Alarm System	\$1,236,000	\$2,000,000	\$764,000 (62% over)
Rooftop Air Handling Units	\$1,339,000	\$2,022,692.50	\$683,692.50 (51%)
Trails Project	\$295,610	\$350,000	\$54,390 (18.4%)
Fitness Ctr	\$852,000	\$1,500,000	\$648,000 (76.1%)

money matters

the problem (see table below for recent examples).

Obviously, many of these expenditures are necessary infrastructure maintenance, but consistently exceeding the Reserve Study estimates for necessary infrastructure expenses just reinforces the need to cut back on some of the purely aesthetic and unnecessary features in the CC renovation proposals to reduce that major projected \$7.2 million cost. If not, it is safe to assume you will see *significant* increases in your condo dues over the next 7 years.

If you share any of the concerns expressed here or have other feedback, please contact us at MontebelloFinances@gmail.com 📧



Photo by Linda Brownlee

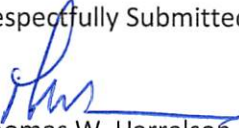
Treasurer's Report 8/13/2019

The MCOA's finances remain on budget at the end of the first seven months of our fiscal year. As of July 31, 2019, our Total Reserve Funds were \$9,697,775 and Operating Cash was \$210,748. Our current liabilities stood at \$690,620.

Our actual operating expenditures for the first seven months were 2.1% under budget and income was 3.03% above budget.

However, I repeat a word of caution for the future as the clouds on the horizon have not dissipated but have gotten darker. Vendor prices are increasing beyond the original projected expense. The recent rate cut by the Federal Reserve and the uncertainty created by the tariff fight with China are creating chaos in the financial markets. For the first time, the U.S. markets are wary that a negative interest rate scenario existing in Europe and Japan could develop in the United States which would have a negative impact on our investments. We are working with Management and the Finance & Budget Committee to prepare the 2020 budgets that will maintain our reserve funds at a safe level. To accomplish that we will have to move some reserve projects into future years and condo fees will be impacted. We will have a better grasp on these changes as we approach year-end and receive actual price quotes from the vendors for 2020 projects.

Respectfully Submitted,



Thomas W. Harrelson

Treasurer

Courtesy of Tom Harrelson

a portrait of an artist



ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST REBECCA McNEELY

Colors, Colors, Colors!

LETTING THE PAINTING LEAD HER | BY DONNA CEDAR-SOUTHWORTH

a portrait of an artist



Rebecca McNeely

Rebecca McNeely's color field landscapes and abstracted florals are bursting with color-luscious, vibrant, harmonious colors. Many of her pieces are so thick with paint that it appears to be dripping right off the canvas. The bold, visible brushstrokes still look wet. The layers are thick; there's movement and markmaking, and sometimes within a painting there's a hint of collage. And always, her paintings are colorful. They really feel like a celebration of color and of life.

"My inspiration is the beauty of nature and how restorative nature is to humans," says the Alexandria resident. "I'm thrilled when I'm in Sedona and the Bay

Area, the central coast of California, the wide open spaces. I love it there; it suits my soul."

Rebecca's an expressionistic painter and a colorist. "My body of work represents a fusion of my love of color, of nature and of freedom of expression," she says. Whether her subject is the sea, the desert, the wheat fields, canyonlands or the emergence of spring and its flowers bursting open with sublime aromas, Rebecca embraces it all. They become products of her memory, which she calls upon when she takes paint to canvas.

Rebecca works in both oils and water-based media. When I approach a painting," she says, "I might have an idea in mind but it's basically all imagination and

a portrait of an artist



"I might have an idea in mind but it's basically all imagination and color... The painting talks back to me. It's like having a dialogue—working with the painting—letting the painting lead you, letting your arm move intuitively."

—Rebecca McNeely



color and working with the paint. The painting talks back to me. It's like having a dialogue—working with the painting—letting the painting lead you, letting your arm move intuitively."

Rebecca's artistic journey began at an early age. Growing up in Kansas, she says, "We had beautiful, glorious skies there and that was really the major art inspiration available to me as a child—those amazing skies." She loved sketching in nature. Graduating from the University of Kansas, she earned a B.A. in journalism and political science. She particularly loved creative writing classes and studying black-and-white photography. "I learned a lot about value and composition in photography."

After graduation, she moved to Washington, D.C. where she served as a Washington correspondent for Federated Publications and earned her M.A. in American Studies at George Washington University. But she needed another outlet, and visual arts were her "play." In the 1970's she took a hiatus from work to raise her two children and her "play" turned into her passion. She studied photography, design, composition and art history at Northern Virginia Community College. "I soaked it up! I absorbed it all," she says.

She went back to work in writing and communications, working for the *National Geographic Society* News Service, *National Geographic Traveler*, and the Nature Conservancy International.

By the 1990's, her children went off to college,

a portrait of an artist



Page 30: "Celebrated Terrain," acrylic and collage, 36" x 36"

Page 21: "Garden of Dreams II," acrylic, 30" x 30"

Opposite clockwise from top left: "Going the Distance," acrylic on Arches paper, 20" x 26"; "Wetlands Sunset," acrylic on canvas, 24" x 36"; and "Bourbon Street Trio," acrylic on Arches paper, 15" x 22"

Above: "Language of the Universe," acrylic and collage on paper, 22" x 16"

and Rebecca did something bold. "I made a cross-country trek, which changed me tremendously. I was alone, without a phone and without GPS. And I could not believe how glorious the great American desert is. There's a sense of freedom and openness and possibilities. I found my spiritual home somewhere in Colorado and California," she says. Rebecca took up residence out West and studied painting at San Mateo College and The School of Light and Color in California. She fell in love with painting, first *plein air* painting with an impressionistic bent and then abstract art. With pure abstraction, she missed the landscape, "so I started making my color-informed work into something that to me represented the landscape," she says.

In 2007, with grandchildren on the East Coast, she moved back to Northern Virginia; she studied painting at The Art League of Alexandria, where she now serves on the Board.

Most of Rebecca's paintings are "alla prima," which means she just starts painting—no sketching—just taking paint to canvas. For a base coat, she might take

her palette knife, fill it with what's left on a wet color palette and "slash it all over, just to get the white off and to give me something to work against," she says. She might begin thinking it will be a landscape or floral, but from there the painting takes her on its own journey. "It's a dance with the painting."

"I call my work abstract expressionist," says Rebecca. "Even if it's not completely nonrepresentational, I only paint in an expressive way—with loose brushstrokes. I want the viewer to see the brushstrokes, the big sweeping strokes. I come at it with my whole self. ... Painting takes up your whole self—it's physical, it's mental—you have to have your soul and heart in it. I feel very fortunate that I've discovered what my heart loves...I feel like I know what I'm doing now, and it takes many years of painting to get there."

Rebecca's work can be seen at Gallery Clarendon and Gallery 75 at the Torpedo Factory. She's also an exhibiting member of Cyan Studios in Arlington. é

Rebecca McNeely | www.rebeccamcneely.com

Blossoming at Montebello
 digital photo-prints by
Jeanne Tiff

Montebello Cafe
 Aug. 24 - Oct. 4
 2019

opening reception
 Saturday, August 24, 4pm - 6pm
 cash bar & nibbles
 all are welcome!

**MONTEBELLO MUSIC CLUB
 CONCERT SERIES**

VIOLA & PIANO

Sunday, August 25, 2019, 5 p.m.
MONTEBELLO COMMUNITY CENTER

DAVID PEDRAZA

**ANNA
 NIZHEGORODTSEVA**

*No Charge – Sponsored by the Montebello Music Club
 Donations to the MMC gratefully accepted.*

Montebello Classic Movie Night
Wednesday, August 28, 2019, at 7pm
on the Big Screen in the Community Center

**JEANNE MADELEINE GEORGE RICHARD
 CRAIN CARROLL SANDERS GREENE**

**Based on Oscar Wilde's
 Profoundly Moving Play,
 "Lady Windemere's Fan"**

Producer/Director Otto Preminger brings Oscar Wilde's scintillating and sophisticated 1892 play — his fourth — to magnificent, heart-wrenching life. The fact that it was originally entitled *Lady Windemere's Fan: a Play About a Good Woman* tells you everything. It had already inspired four film interpretations before Preminger's 1949 version, including an Argentinian version, *Story of a Bad Woman*. But it is difficult to imagine anything more inspired than the great casting and delivery of Preminger's version. Wilde himself would weep at this adaptation of his inspiring tale of pathos and dignity.

FREE popcorn, candies, and soft drinks for a great classic movie night!

Your host, Pamela Copley, will give you a pre-show briefing on the stars and the production, and then give you all the post-screening "back story" highlights. Pamela can be contacted at PvonGruber@aol.com.

AIM ART IN MONTEBELLO and **MONTEBELLO FILM SOCIETY**

Invite you to our films & discussion

THE MONTEBELLO

FOWL FILM FESTIVAL
THURSDAY AUGUST 29 7:30 P.M. PARTY ROOM 2

A DOCUMENTARY BY TASHAI LOVINGTQN & ROBERT JUGHAI
MAD CITY CHICKENS

For a lighter double-feature, join us for two chicken documentaries, The Jewish Chicken Farmers of Petaluma: Why Remember? and Mad City Chickens. Find out which one came first.

Marsha Weiner and Joel Miller will introduce the films and lead the post-movie discussion.

final glance

I bought a dusty box of century-old negatives at an estate sale. Each of the negatives was in a decaying paper sleeve which had a typed description. There are many wonderful photos of children and places in and around Cape May, NJ, circa 1922. Eventually I will clean and process the nearly 200 images and perhaps do a story or a show of the 1922 Jersey Girls of Cape May. Attached are a few of the first quick-and-dirty attempts to look through the negatives and into the past as captured by an unknown photographer. – Joel Miller



Alice on bicycle, Betty on kiddy-kart



Cathy makes a call



Child with spoon eats Shredded Wheat