



Photo by Carlos Porrata

*A lone coyote spotted amid Douglas irises near the Estero Trail in the Point Reyes National Seashore last month was a sensational—and seasonal—shot for Inverness photographer Carlos Porrata.*

## Library Lease Agreement Pleases Everyone...at Last

By Elizabeth Whitney

**I**T'S BEEN A LONG HAUL, but, finally, on March 25, 2015, IA president Nick Whitney was able to sign a lease agreement with the County of Marin for the Inverness Library. The brief ceremony and round of applause at the Board meeting was a contrast to nearly two years of push and pull between IA negotiators and county bureaucrats to set the terms of the new financial arrangement between the Inverness Foundation, who owns the Gables building, and its tenant, the Marin County Library.

While everyone agreed in spirit that the Inverness Library is the ideal tenant for the historic building purchased 30 years ago from the Jack Mason estate, it took gritty determination by the Foundation/Association Board to get adequate rental income and formal terms for the county occupancy. For many years the rent was too low (\$650) due to the lack of lease and the slow pace of progress toward ADA compliance that involved

*Nick Whitney signs the Inverness Library lease.*

## Nature's Dynamic Keeps Carlos Porrata Busy

Retired from a career as state park ranger, Carlos Porrata keeps his hiking boots handy for his own pleasure: photographing local wildlife in action. He knows the territory from his ranger years and his camera skills are evolving to match that expertise. Photographs of bobcats, owls and their babies, coyotes grabbing a gopher with an acrobatic leap and picturesque wildfowl have been exhibited at the Dance Palace and now post daily on many locals' Facebook feed.

both internal remodeling and adaptations to the building itself. Once compliance was achieved, the library had a month-to-month rent that was relatively high—\$1829—and the incentive to settle on a new formula was strong on both sides. Thanks to lobbying from the Inverness Foundation, the county agreed to refund the Gables handicapped access upgrades on the building from funds set aside by the Marin County Free Library specifically for this purpose. The reimbursement for the repairs came from County Supervisor Steve Kinsey's efforts endorsing the use of county funds and working with both sides to get an agreement.

All this hinged on signing a mutually agreed-upon lease. Nearly two years since it all began, the formality of being a busi-  
*(Continued on page 3)*

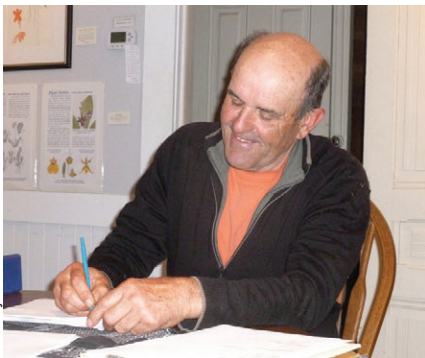


Photo by Martha Proctor

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

After four years on the Board and two as your president, I have decided to step down. We are losing three other excellent Board members as well: Martha Proctor, who spearheaded our new website; Jim Grant, our membership chairman and hard-working subcommittee member, and Mike Durrie, our treasurer and do everything member who spearheaded the difficult library lease negotiations. Longtime Board member Michael Mery retired last October. Michael served as our liaison with the Jack Mason Museum Committee and helped Bridger Mitchell with the job we call "county coping." All these folks deserve your thanks.

In the period I have presided, there have been a number of valuable accomplishments. The library lease is behind us. There are wonderful new stairs and a new bridge on the Aberdeen trail. We have a new website. Our relationship with the Boathouse is about to be simplified, giving new and improved access to Children's Beach. The trails are in good shape thanks to Burton Eubank. We continue to support youth sailing and tennis through the IYC and ITC, and there is a new sculpture in Martinelli Park.

There are important issues ahead—the fate of the Green Bridge and the Hidden Dragon proposal—but we have a new influx of board members including Alex Porrata, now serving, and a slate of nominees to present to you at the annual meeting. The community is in good hands. It has been an honor to serve.

—Nick Whitney

### Boathouse Update

The Board of the Inverness Foundation is recommending removing the deed restriction that restricts use of the property. The property is zoned residential so that use restriction would be removed. All other deed restrictions would continue and all uses would be subject to county codes. The Foundation will relinquish this restriction when suitable public access has been furnished at the expense of the owners with the approval of the Foundation. As this is a major change in the Foundation's relationship to the Boathouse and its owners, it is necessary for the general membership to vote on this proposal at the annual meeting. This up-date serves as the appropriate notification of a major pending decision as required by our bylaws.

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### Annual Meeting & Election of New Board Members

Saturday, July 11, 7:30 p.m.  
Inverness Yacht Club

### Inverness Fair on the Firehouse Green

Saturday, August 8, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

### Tomales Bay Waterdogs

July 27 – August 7  
This program sponsored by West Marin Community Services teaches kids to safely enjoy our beautiful bay. Donations and volunteers are always needed. Call (415) 663-8361 or mail checks to WMCC, P.O. Box 1093, Point Reyes Station 94956.

The Inverness Association and the Inverness Foundation have the same Board of Directors and both meet monthly at the Gables with back-to-back agendas. The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and manages the properties it owns among its other responsibilities. Overseeing the Gables upgrade falls under the purview of the Foundation.

Inverness Association  
Post Office Box 382  
Inverness, California 94937  
www.invernessassociation.org

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Family \$45  
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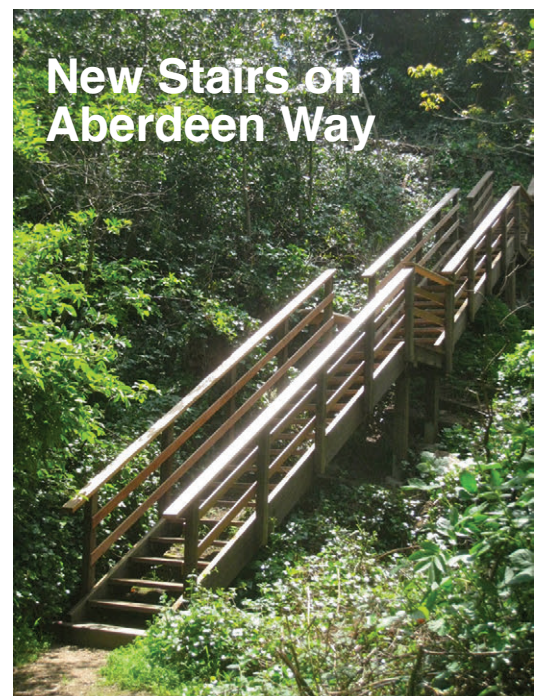


Photo by Elizabeth Whitney

*M & M Construction, father and son Mark and Chris Miller of Inverness Park, completed new stairs off Aberdeen Way, sponsored by donations from 86 donors for \$14,711.*

**The new website is on line!**  
[www.invernessassociation.org](http://www.invernessassociation.org)

# Alex Porrata Emerges with Her Spirit Strong

by Elizabeth Whitney

“EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT NOW.” There’s a pause in the conversation when Alex Porrata talks about the new stage in her life represented by the end of her son’s chemotherapy treatments—a grueling experience that lasted nearly 15 months—and the move back into her small “casita” on her family property in Seahaven.

Until a few weeks ago, Alex, Ezequiel and daughter Lulu were living with her parents Carlos and Rebecca Porrata in the main house, the hub of everything that needed to happen to maintain her life taking care of her children after her husband’s death only 19 days after 4-year old Zekie’s cancer diagnosis. The intensity of his harrowing cycle of chemotherapy—“the only way I could handle it was my focus on the treatment calendar”—is behind her. She feels a new call in her life: “It’s time to get myself out there again.”

When the news hit the greater Inverness community of Zekie’s cancer diagnosis followed by his father Roneil Powell’s fatal heart attack, it galvanized a support system and profoundly touched the lives of all the local young families with children who know and love the Porrata-Powells. Alex puts it simply: “The comfort, reassurance and relief that I received from the community helped me through this terrible experience.”

A new normal is beginning to take shape as Alex answers the question, What do I do with myself? She is 43, a young widow with a lively 8-year-old and a child who is still under the shadow of cancer. Meanwhile, Lulu is playing baseball with the Palace Market Owlz and Zekie is in good spirits. He has regained a level of activity and well-being that was unimaginable when he was first diagnosed and the weekly protocols began. “He’s coming back,” smiles his mother. “He is full of love and laughter and joy.”

There is a lot of happiness in the family today: an upcoming



*Alex Porrata fills retiring member Michael Mery’s slot on the IA/IF Board of Directors*

trip to Aulani Disney Resort in Hawaii from the Make-A-Wish Foundation for the extended family and a celebration on June 14 to thank the community and to support a program called “Alex (no connection)’s Lemonade Stand” that raises funds for pediatric cancer research—our Alex is the California representative for this. There are other new projects in Alex’s life—a cosmetic business shared with her sister Yoli promoting all natural skin products—and the decision to fill a vacant board position on the Inverness Association.

Inverness is where the deep roots took hold for Alex, who arrived here in 1977 with her parents in time to start kindergarten. Her father Carlos became State Park Ranger for Tomales Bay State Park and Samuel P. Taylor and her mother, Rebecca, a nurse, worked her way into the public health field and became instrumental in inte-

grating the Hispanic community into the local community. Her sister, Yolanda, known to her kids as Titi Yoli, is now married and living in San Francisco but still deeply woven into the family complex.

Looking around at the casita where she lived with her husband, Alex acknowledges the blend of sadness and joy that is always with her and her family. She remembers the fullness of her life with Ron and how meaningful the community memorials were for his family, who learned so much about their son through the memories shared by his friends. She adds that Ron’s urban Los Angeles family loves to visit the climbing structure cut from a fallen cedar tree in Martinelli Park that is dedicated to the children of Inverness in his memory.

Alex Porrata’s quiet optimism is authentic, born from the depths of her warrior journey. “I’m a different person. I enjoy today—I don’t sweat the small stuff. I remind myself how lucky we are: the blessings of our relationships; how strong our family is...My children are going to be fine.”

Photo by Elizabeth Fenwick

## Library lease *from page 1*

nesslike landlord to the county library has now occurred. The new lease sets the rent at \$1400/month and the reimbursement for \$113,000 was received on April 21.

Several Board members deserve extra credit for tenacious bargaining with county personnel, seeing the hidden issues that needed to be resolved and having a realistic perspective on the amount of money needed to continue maintenance on the vintage building. Mike Durrie, Bridger Mitchell and Marshall Livingston were negotiators on behalf of the Inverness Foundation through many challenging meetings.

The Gables is the considered the oldest house in Inverness, dating from 1893, and its maintenance needs are likely to be a constant obligation for the Inverness Foundation. In the discussions about the lease and whether the rent is adequate to meet those needs, the concept of forming a separate fund-raising group for the building gained some momentum in the last two months.

To this end, “Friends of the Gables” was proposed this spring as a new committee of the Foundation. This group will draw representatives from the Jack Mason Museum committee and the Inverness Foundation board as well as inspired community members who value the building and the role it plays in creating a convivial center for Inverness residents.

**Inverness Foundation**  
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The Inverness Association meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Jack Mason Museum. The agenda is posted in advance on our website: [www.invernessassociation.org](http://www.invernessassociation.org)

TWENTY YEARS AFTER Inverness Ridge Fire, the thousands of Bishop pine trees seeded by the heat of the fire have a new adversary: a pathogen called *fusarium circinatum* that causes pitch canker disease. Amidst the dramatic re-growth that occurred after the 1995 fire now appear many dead and dying trees, changing the panoramas dramatically for those familiar with the Limantour Road landscape.

The Bishop pine forest in the Point Reyes National Seashore is referred to as a relic forest, existing in a very narrow distribution unique to granite quartz-diorite soils. The appearance of pitch canker disease here has been observed since 2007 but the intensity of the die-off appears recent to local observers. The trees are weakened by the infection and die from infesting insects such as engraver beetles.

Possibly accelerated by drought conditions, the situation remains under watch by National Seashore management personnel as the dead trees add to fire danger. Falling trees that line roads and endanger trails within the park are removed as much as possible, but there are no resources currently available to address the removal of the dead trees.

Watching the Bishop pine forest recover from the fire is a lesson for all as we witness the forest thinning itself through disease. At what point will the fear of a future fire demand a human response as well? This is the question being asked by professionals, park visitors and local neighbors.  
—Elizabeth Whitney

## Bishop Pines Under Attack by Pathogen



Photo by Elizabeth Whitney

Pitch canker disease is hitting the Bishop Pine forest in the Point Reyes National Seashore hard. The first sign of infection is needles at the tips of branches turning brown. Close inspection will show the resin dripping near the site.