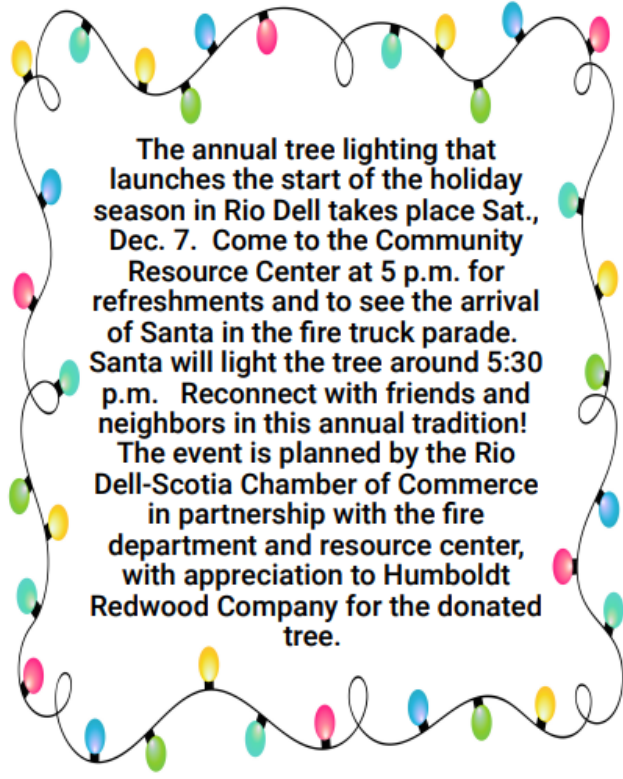




Tree lighting set for Dec. 7



The annual tree lighting that launches the start of the holiday season in Rio Dell takes place Sat., Dec. 7. Come to the Community Resource Center at 5 p.m. for refreshments and to see the arrival of Santa in the fire truck parade. Santa will light the tree around 5:30 p.m. Reconnect with friends and neighbors in this annual tradition! The event is planned by the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the fire department and resource center, with appreciation to Humboldt Redwood Company for the donated tree.

Happy Holidays!

Dec. 21 event marking anniversary of '64 flood set

The Rio Dell-Scotia chamber is planning a free event marking the 60th anniversary of the 1964 flood at the Scotia Lodge, 1-4 p.m. on Sat., Dec. 21. The video High Water Mark and other presentations will be shown, there will be refreshments by C&C Catering, and the historic Lodge will be decorated for Christmas. Come share this time with friends and family. Do you have memories of that event you'd like to share? Memorabilia? Contact the chamber at rdschamber@gmail.com or 707.506.5081.

Sign up for the decorating competition! Get in the holiday spirit, have fun, and possibly earn cash! Enter by Dec. 13

The chamber-sponsored 4th annual home and business decorating competition is underway, with cash prizes from the volunteer fire department - \$250 for first, \$150 for second and \$100 for third place for homes and for businesses.

Sign up by Dec. 13 to have your home or business judged - just fill out the Google Doc sign-up sheet pinned to the top of the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce Facebook page (facebook.com/RDSCvisitorscenter) or Instagram account (instagram.com/visitriodellscotia/). Or, sign up by paper at Shotz Coffee or the Community Resource Center in Rio Dell. All homes and businesses in Rio Dell and Scotia are eligible. Businesses can choose to have their interiors or their exteriors judged.

Tell your friends and neighbors! Have a friendly block-wide competition! Give people in other communities something to come to Rio Dell and Scotia to see!

See and vote for the decorations you like!

Starting Dec. 15, download the map of homes and businesses entered in the competition on your mobile device or pick up a paper copy at Shotz or the Community Resource Center in Rio Dell and vote for your first-place choice for homes and for businesses. Take the family and walk or drive around, getting in the seasonal spirit while enjoying the lights and decorations. Voting closes at midnight Dec. 24 for those voting online, and by 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 22 for those dropping paper ballots off at Shotz.

The winner will be the one with the most votes, and second/third places will go to those with the second and third most votes. Winners will be announced and prize checks presented right after Christmas.



December 21st - Winter Solstice



December 25th - Christmas, Hanukkah begins at sundown



December 26th - Kwanzaa begins





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Flag holidays extend to Scotia

The Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce has been setting flags out on Wildwood on flag holidays for a few years now, and the intent has been to extend the display to Scotia. That happened on Veterans Day, with the first installation of four flags in front of the Community Services District office. Susan Pryor, chamber board member and CSD director, set them up herself, noting the CSD staff had created the holes needed for posting the flags.



Others are planned, with permission granted for locations, but the work falls to chamber members who have been hampered by logistics including lack of person-power. Want to make this happen? Reach out to the chamber with weekend times you would be available to help starting in late December (yes, weather will be a factor) at rdschamber@gmail.com, or 707.506.5081.

Get involved with the chamber - new members sought

The chamber board meets each month on the first Friday, at noon in the board room of the Town of Scotia LLC, 108 Main Street, Scotia, with an online option. Go to the chamber web page, riodelscotiachamber.org, and click on the calendar listing to get the online link.

Meetings are open to the public and a great opportunity to suggest ideas, offer help, or learn about upcoming events and plans. This is also the time each year that we remind people membership dues for 2025 can be paid - watch for notices, click on the chamber website link for membership information, come to a meeting, call 707.506.5081 or email rdschamber@gmail.com with your interest in joining, renewing, or changing your level of support which ranges from individual, at \$35 per head, to businesses at \$50 for basic up to higher levels for sustaining members.

Rio Dell man gets back in the act

Little Al Hooten as he is occasionally called, or Albert Houghton to others, made his return to the stage last month, where he has brought joy to people for a decade prior to Covid's shutdowns. The Rio Dell resident's performing re-launch was held at Sequoia Springs in Fortuna, a senior living community, during the weekly happy hour when residents are treated to live music and refreshments mid-afternoon.



Houghton was accompanied by a sound system offering background music to his range of gospel, old-time and traditional songs, delivered with an energetic style incorporating dance moves. He had people smiling and at one point, dancing. Assisting him with set-up was Rio Dell friend Jim Quittenton whose wife Renee accompanied Houghton on a gospel song.



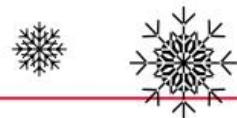
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Lex the Barber to set up shop



Watch for a new business in Rio Dell – Lex the Barber signed a lease at 220 Wildwood and hopes for a soft opening at the start of December. His head is full of dreams about how he will extend his signature barbering experience – pampering his customers, evoking memories of an earlier time, and providing an environment in which people can feel safe, and at home, no matter who they are.

Alex Calderon, as he is also known, chats from the Scotia home he shares with two dogs and not much furniture. He is putting everything he has into his dream, which he came to when a former neighbor spoke to him about cosmetology school and set him on the career path which launched him in many new directions. “I want to barber 12 hours a day,” he said of the joy it brings to connect with customers, and the response they provide to his care, for instance saying that the smells and experience he provides (for now he is working at 4Ever Faded, a shop on F Street in Eureka) take them back to memories of childhood.



Calderon is drawn not just to providing a positive, sensory experience (“some people don’t feel human touch otherwise,” he notes, and find they crave the contact involved in barbering) but to serving special-needs populations. Those include veterans at the annual October Stand Down at the fairgrounds in Ferndale, where he offers free haircuts, and children on the autistic spectrum, whom he provides for in a special room he calls his personal studio, which he built with his tip money, using quieter clippers and care that helps them overcome their objection to the experience.

He has learned to work with these young clients with help from their parents, to identify the barriers the children run up against in getting a traditional haircut, and finding ways around them. His barbering studio features soft music from the Big Band era, an array of toys including an expansive Hot Wheels collection, and the barbering chair he calls the Delorean, indicating a poster on the wall featuring the car in the movie Back to the Future.

Calderon moved to Scotia in 2008 from his native Southern California, and at 48 years old, has worked in many careers, including a security business, firearms training, real estate and wine sales. After a divorce, he headed to San Francisco looking for a new direction but returned to the area, and credits Sarah Reback, coordinator of the Community Resource Center in Rio Dell, with providing him a lot of help and information about services that could benefit him. Out of appreciation, the resource center is one of the places he visits when he has spare time, to provide free haircuts to people with special needs. Plans include expanding his repertoire of skills to help others, by visiting facilities such as hospitals and nursing homes to gather information about working with their populations. **continued on page 4**

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Rio Dell-Scotia News

Is free of charge, published monthly by the Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce and the Rio Dell Community Resource Center. Funded by local businesses and the St. Joseph Health System. 650 copies distributed in Rio Dell, Scotia, and Fortuna.

Deadline for January newsletter is December 13th.

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4



Lex the Barber to set up shop, story cont. from page 3

Calderon is quick to say he owes his success to others, which is why he is eager to give back. "Your tax dollars put me through school," he tells people when he offers his services for free. He speaks of hard times he has known, depression and hunger, when he went to food pantries, and slept in his car. He also speaks of God and faith, determination and hard work. "If it were easy we would all have it," he says of meeting one's goals.

"I was able to get a \$15,000 grant to go to barbering school," he says, from the Department of Rehabilitation due to his having post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He attended Frederick and Charles Beauty College in Eureka, a nine-month training program he completed in seven months, because he was determined and went all-in to learn. "I can do women's hair, children's," he says of his training.

Calderon expects to start the new shop with one chair but envisions expanding as he builds up clientele, where he can hire others, another way of giving back. He owns a trailer that he is considering turning into a mobile barber shop to take to other communities. "I'm an ambitious entrepreneur," he says, and believes someday he will own several shops. In the meantime, he wants to make his new shop welcoming.

He plans to call the new business Neighborhoods Barber Shop, pointing out he will serve many neighborhoods, from Scotia and Rio Dell out to Shively and beyond. The building has 12-foot ceilings, and he smiles as he envisions the décor, with Frank Sinatra on the sound system and a bench outside where people can sit and talk. The bus stop is right outside, he notes. His dogs, a French bulldog and her son, a French-English bulldog cross, will be there.

He sees talk as important in his service to clients – "it's cheap therapy," he says, and his goal is to encourage people of all walks of life to find a safe space to speak their truth. Being able to laugh with others about their differences is a goal, he says, that he can combine with his barbering. "Life is hairy – you don't have to be," he smiles.

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