

Vallejo is grateful for...

Karen Finlay & Jon Burchard



Karen Finlay and Jon Burchard in Alibi Bookshop.

Place of birth: **Jon:** San Bernardino, CA.
Karen: Torrance, CA.

Year arrived in Vallejo: 2017

Occupation: Owners, Alibi Bookstore
Jon: Accountant

What is your most important contribution to Vallejo? Buying the bookstore. As Neil Gaiman said, "A town isn't a town without a bookstore."

What have you done during the pandemic to help others? The most important thing we've done is keep the bookstore open. It has given people a place to go, and a sense of community. Some people only went out to the grocery store and the bookstore for months! I've listened to a lot of stories, had some laughs despite everything, and held space for people to feel "normal." And provided really good books as an alternative to "doomscrolling" on phones.

What is one pandemic silver lining? It enabled a lot of us to slow down and evaluate what's important in life. We learned to better appreciate family and friends.

What is your special talent? **Karen:** I love recommending books to people! There's something so special about connecting people with a book they will enjoy reading. It's almost like matchmaking. I've walked down the street only to hear people yell out their car windows about a book they love that I recommended, and have received many thank-you emails and texts. I love that so much. **Jon:** I'm fairly quiet, but passionate about the things I believe in.

What is a special memory of Vallejo? **Karen:** Every day in the bookstore I get to create memories, what I call "bookstories," about the people who come in and make this community so extraordinary. My favorite thing in the world is when little kids come in and get so excited! Aside from the bookstore, my favorite memory is the first time we went and got our Christmas tree at Loma Vista Farm; it was so enchanting, and I just loved it.

What is your favorite Vallejo community event? Farmer's Market on Saturdays. Art Walk! And we are so excited for the return of The Mad Hatter and 4th of July Parade. And NightMare Island! The new biannual vintage Maker Fair by Dillon's Bakery is just terrific.

What do you hope for Vallejo in the next 10 years? We hope for the continued revitalization of downtown and would like to see it develop into a robust place for shopping, eating and fun.

What organization in Vallejo do you really appreciate? **Jon:** I really appreciate Brendan Riley for his knowledge of Vallejo's history, his pieces in the *Times-Herald* and for being an all-around great person along with his whole family. **Karen:** I want to give a shout-out to Vallejo teachers. The past two years have been such a struggle for kids, parents, and teachers, and I want to give teachers gratitude for showing up for all those kids. I also appreciate Another Chapter Solano for getting books into needy kids' hands, and the Vallejo Project and Vessels of Vallejo for having such important vision and doing so much work around town to make it a better place. It's hard to pinpoint one organization because the Vallejo community is so passionate, with so many outstanding contributors.