

Lower Haight Local

The Local Magazine of Lower Haight, SF

Issue 9: May 2026



COVER: Composition of Multiple Artists including Jason Pace & Evelyn McSpirit

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Note From The Editor

Joel Reske, Editor-in-Chief

Hello neighbor! You are holding the ninth issue of Lower Haight Local, a local newsletter / zine for all of the amazing people and things happening in Lower Haight. This magazine is the direct product of your neighbors' writing, doodling, and designing. Some fun updates from last month:

- The last magazine distribution party was done in collaboration with a block party hosted by Community Streets. It was an awesome day!
- The **Lower Haight Yard Sale Day** was a HUGE success. We mapped 20 different yard sales and hundreds of neighbors and people from around the city came out and filled the neighborhood with joy.

As always, this is your paper. Get involved and help make it what you want!

To stay up to date, follow us on Instagram **@lowerhaightlocal**

To help write/edit/anything, go to **lowerhaightlocal.com/help**

Anything here you want to see in the zine / respond to? Email **hi@lowerhaightlocal.com**

Keep Lower Haight Local Going

Lower Haight Local is a 501(c)(3) connecting people in Lower Haight. We do it by writing, printing, and distributing a free monthly magazine — the one you're holding right now — and by hosting neighborhood events, meetups, and more. It's already brought so many neighbors together. Unfortunately, printing and distributing physically aren't free, and we could really use your financial support.

Become a Member. Your membership supports sidewalk events, gatherings, volunteer projects, and local spotlights that keep this neighborhood connected.

Make a One-Time Donation. Every dollar goes directly to production costs and distribution. We've set a goal to raise \$10k, which would mean that we could support the magazine for at least 8 months.

Scan the codes, join today and help us keep it free for everyone.

Become a Member



One-time Donation



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Joel Reske

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Siena Applebaum

NEWS EDITOR

Deanna Dong

LOHAMNA LIASON

Molly Hayden

ARTS EDITOR

Annalise Wulf

COPY EDITS

Emma Conroy

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

Nate Pellini

GRANT DEVELOPMENT LEAD

Mrignyani Sehgal

EVENTS LEAD

Roan Back

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS LEAD

Joyce Chen

LAYOUT MANAGER

Evelyn McSpirit

OTHER THANKS

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1074 Folsom Street

Traffic Safety

by Deanna Dong

Supervisor Bilal Mahmood has approved **\$700,000** of capital expenditures for traffic safety improvements in District 5, including Lower Haight. These funds come from District 5's Neighborhood Transportation Program (NTP) allocation through the SF County Transportation Authority. Most districts haven't tapped NTP funds for traffic calming at this scale.

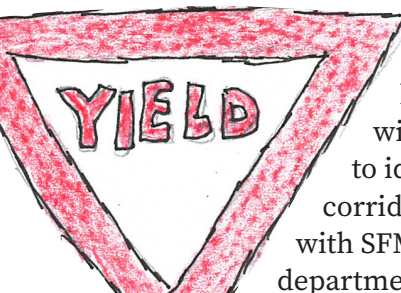


The first initiative put \$117,500 toward daylighting last October, which refers to keeping intersections **clear of parked cars so pedestrians and drivers can see each other**. "A state law had passed requiring it, but San Francisco still hadn't painted all its curbs. So we immediately authorized it, making our district the **first** to be fully daylighted.

Data from cities like Hoboken, New Jersey, shows that daylighting dropped traffic fatalities to near **zero**, so we felt it was the most impactful first step." said district supervisor Bilal Mahmood.

This past February, Mahmood approved a plan to spend the remaining funds on traffic calming measures like **painted safety zones, raised crosswalks, speed humps, and speed cushions**.

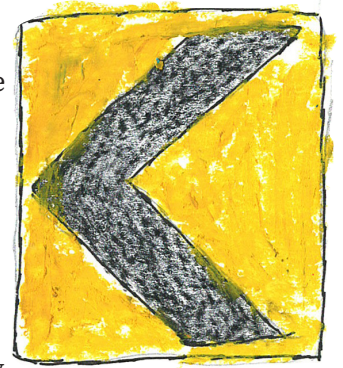
"We met with residents to understand how we could make progress on Vision Zero goals even with a budget deficit," said Mahmood. Vision Zero is the city's policy commitment to eliminate all traffic deaths and severe injuries on city streets.



His team gathered **300** survey responses from residents on where investments should be placed, overlaid that with traffic injury data to identify the highest-risk corridors, and coordinated with SFMTA and the fire department on feasibility. They

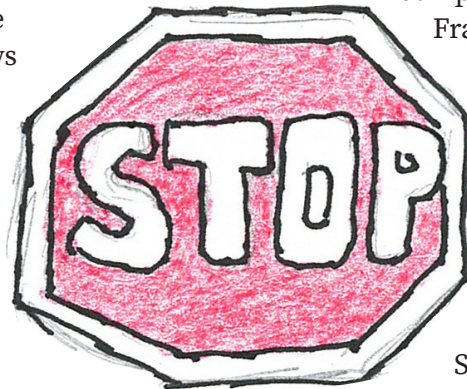
are now finalizing specific locations and solidifying a contract with SFMTA by the end of May.

In addition to these traffic calming efforts, Lower Haight now has a new tool to monitor its street safety trends. **TranspoMap** is a nonprofit started in 2022 by long-time Lower Haight resident **Stephen Braitsch**.



"I built TranspoMaps as a new approach to advocacy for safer streets," said Braitsch. "Just waving signs at City Hall and signing petitions often doesn't get a whole lot accomplished. We try to mobilize people around the data to have constructive conversations with city officials."

He recently launched a data dashboard for Lower Haight that tracks traffic safety metrics, along with police reports, 911 emergency calls, and 311 complaints. Using data from the San Francisco Department of Public Health, which processes raw crash data from the San Francisco Police Department, the site analyzes vehicle-related injuries in Lower Haight over time and block by block. For example, based on the last 12 months of available data, the most dangerous block is Haight St. from Octavia St to Laguna St with 12 injuries.



SIGN ARTWORK: Emily

"If you want to make the neighborhood a little safer or fix the issue on your block, reach out to us," said Braitsch. "We'll organize calls with you and the district supervisor's office to have a constructive conversation about the issue and what needs to be done."



Dashboard for Traffic Safety Data in Lower Haight

Tacos Oscar

by Mikey Tom

Tacos Oscar may still be fairly new to Lower Haight, but the East Bay taqueria with a cult following has had ties to the neighborhood for over a decade. Before launching his current career as a chef and restaurant owner, **Oscar Michel** previously played gigs in the area with his former band. “I used to book out the Peacock Lounge and hang out at Mad Dog and the Fog,” he says. Years later, Michel finds himself back in the neighborhood, partnering with beer and wine bar Woods—which occupies the former Mad Dog and the Fog space—to serve a seasonal menu alongside Woods’ offerings. “I like Lower Haight,” he says. “It still has that old San Francisco grit that I remember.”

The partnership came through his longtime friend **Mikey Yoon**, who owns Lovely’s, a popular East Bay burger spot. Yoon partnered with Woods in late 2024 to serve his nostalgic burgers, hot dogs, and fries out of its Cole Valley location. If you’ve walked through that neighborhood on a weekend, it’s the spot with the line down the block.

But five months after launching in Lower Haight, Michel says word is still getting out about Tacos Oscar’s new San Francisco outpost. “We did open during the worst time of the year, so that put us in a bit of a hole,” he says. “It’s still kinda slow, but starting to pick up.”

The slower start is slightly surprising for a spot that’s a favorite of industry insiders and the everyday eater alike. **Tacos Oscar was just ranked No. 19 on the San Francisco Chronicle’s Top 100 Restaurants list**, and is also listed in the **Michelin Bib Gourmand guide**. Now, its menu is finally within reach for San Francisco diners, without driving over the Bay Bridge.

Tacos Oscar launched via pop-up at a friend’s music studio opening party in 2014. “At the time, I was always talking about being tired of working for other people, and my buddy really pushed me to ‘stop talking about it, be about it,’” Michel says. “He took me to the Coliseum flea market and paid for a three-burner propane stove and all the food.” The tacos at that party were free, with guests invited to contribute to a tip jar. By the end of the night, it held nearly \$800—more than Michel made in a week at his desk job. “That’s when I realized this is something I could actually do.”

For the next three years, Michel and his business partner, **Jake Weiss**, hosted pop-ups across the East Bay.

“We’d treat every pop-up like a show,” Michel says. “We’d promote the hell out of them with flyers, and the menu was our setlist.”

Fans followed them from one location to the next.

Nowadays, that setlist continues to shift with the seasons. Visit their Temescal or Lower Haight locations and you’ll find various veggie-centric offerings, double-decker quesadillas, and often a well-placed fried egg. Some things don’t change, though. “The bean recipe we use today is basically my grandma’s recipe from when I was growing up, with some tweaks,” he says. What ties almost all the dishes together are hand-pressed tortillas made with masa sourced from La Finca in Oakland.



That same intentionality extends beyond the food to how they operate. Michel emphasizes a steady approach to growth, **prioritizing stability for the business and his team**. “I’d rather pay my staff a living wage and keep them around,” he says, noting that turnover often stems from underpaying workers. At Tacos Oscar, the goal is a workplace where employees can speak up, contribute ideas, and avoid burnout. The environment is purposefully relaxed rather than rigid, a choice Michel believes leads to better food and service.

As the business grows, that philosophy remains central, with plans to increase pay and eventually offer benefits like health insurance to all employees.

Looking ahead, as business allows, the team plans to continue supporting both the East Bay community, where they got their start, and now San Francisco. In Oakland, they've hosted fundraisers for organizations like **Planned Parenthood** and the **Middle East Children's Alliance**, a longtime partner that supports displaced children in Gaza. Oscar and the team are also collaborating with Temescal Brewing on an upcoming beer. Proceeds will benefit **CALMA**, a local organization that supports **laborers, asylum seekers, DACA recipients, and migrants**.

One could argue that the blocks of Haight between Pierce and Webster contain the most interesting stretch of food in the city (the SF Standard did just that last year). As word continues to spread, Tacos Oscar is beginning to find its footing in the bustling Lower Haight, contributing the same mix of food, music, and community that defined its success in Oakland.

This post was written by Mikey Tom, a nine-year Lower Haight resident and author of Fond, a Substack on food in the SF/Bay Area. You can follow him or Tacos Oscar on Instagram at @mikeytom or @tacososcar.

NERT - Emergency Preparedness

by Molly Hayden

If you've lived in San Francisco for any significant amount of time, you've felt an earthquake. When the next big one hits, the SFFD will be stretched thin and focused on major fires and rescues. That's where NERT comes in.

NERT, Neighborhood Emergency Response Team, is a free training program offered by the San Francisco Fire Department that teaches everyday residents how to support their neighbors in a disaster. Participants learn fire suppression basics, light search and rescue, first aid triage, and how to safely shut off gas. The goal is simple: reduce harm in your immediate area until professional help arrives.

How to get involved:

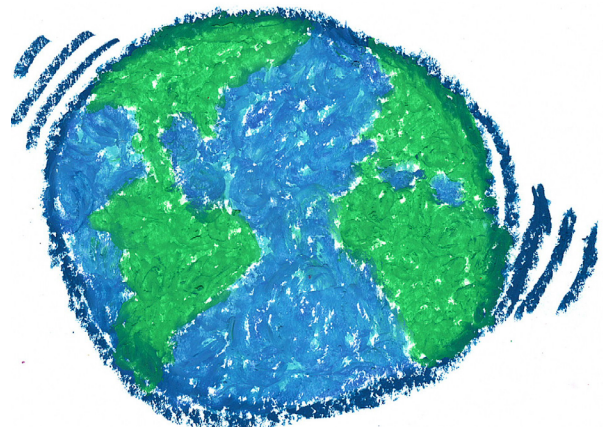
- Free training sessions are offered regularly throughout the city. Find the schedule at sf-fire.org/nert



- Drills and exercises let you practice skills with your neighbors after completing the course
- Neighborhood teams organize by district, so you'll be training alongside the people you'd actually rely on

NERT is open to anyone who lives, works, or studies in San Francisco. No experience necessary — just a willingness to show up for your community when it matters most.

For broader emergency preparedness resources, visit sf.gov/readysf.



Haight of Flavor - May

by Tamara Kahhale

As summer nears, we are finally entering the abundant fruit season! If you shop at farmers markets or have been embarking on a seasonal eating journey, worry no more – a wealth of fruit is coming back to brighten our lives. In the meantime, let's all delight in the transitional foods that are only really available (or at their flavor peak) during this last spring month.

(Divis Famer's Market: Sundays from 9am - 1pm in the DMV parking lot on Fell/Oak - open year round)

Loquat

Indigenous to southeast China, the loquat is a small and sweet fruit with yellow/orange skin, and it contains a large brown seed. When fresh, they are sweet and can be easily peeled (though the skin is edible too). Use them in a sweet treat or just eat them as they are!

Rhubarb

Botanically a vegetable, rhubarb was reclassified as a fruit to lower import tax rates, which is likely what led to its most common pairing with strawberries. Don't let that fool you though – rhubarb is also delicious in savory dishes too, like soups, stews, and salsas!

Garlic scapes

There are two main groups of garlic – “soft” neck and “stiff” neck. Most commercially available garlic is soft neck, as it is less labor intensive and stores better. The less common stiff neck is thought to

be closer to the wild garlic ancestor and has more flavor. In early spring, stiff neck garlic will send up flower stalks called “scapes”, and to keep the plant's energy concentrated in making a garlic bulb rather than flowering, the scapes must be trimmed. These are what you can buy at the market! The garlic flavor is mild, almost like a blend of garlic and green onion, but the overall taste is quite strong. They can be used diversely – stir fried like green beans, roasted and added to a pasta dish, used as the “scallion” in a scallion pancake or as a **pesto**:

150 grams of garlic scapes (9 - 12 scapes – smaller scapes (younger) have a milder flavor)

44 grams (~ $\frac{1}{3}$ cup) of nuts – pine nuts, walnuts, cashews, or sunflower seeds

40 grams (~ $\frac{1}{3}$ cup) freshly grated parmesan cheese

Half of a lemon, juiced

Pinch of salt

70 - 100 grams ($\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$ cup) of olive oil

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh basil (optional)

Trim garlic scapes so that only the curly green part remains. Chop scapes roughly to get them smaller, then put into a blender or food processor. Pulse a couple of times to break them down even further.

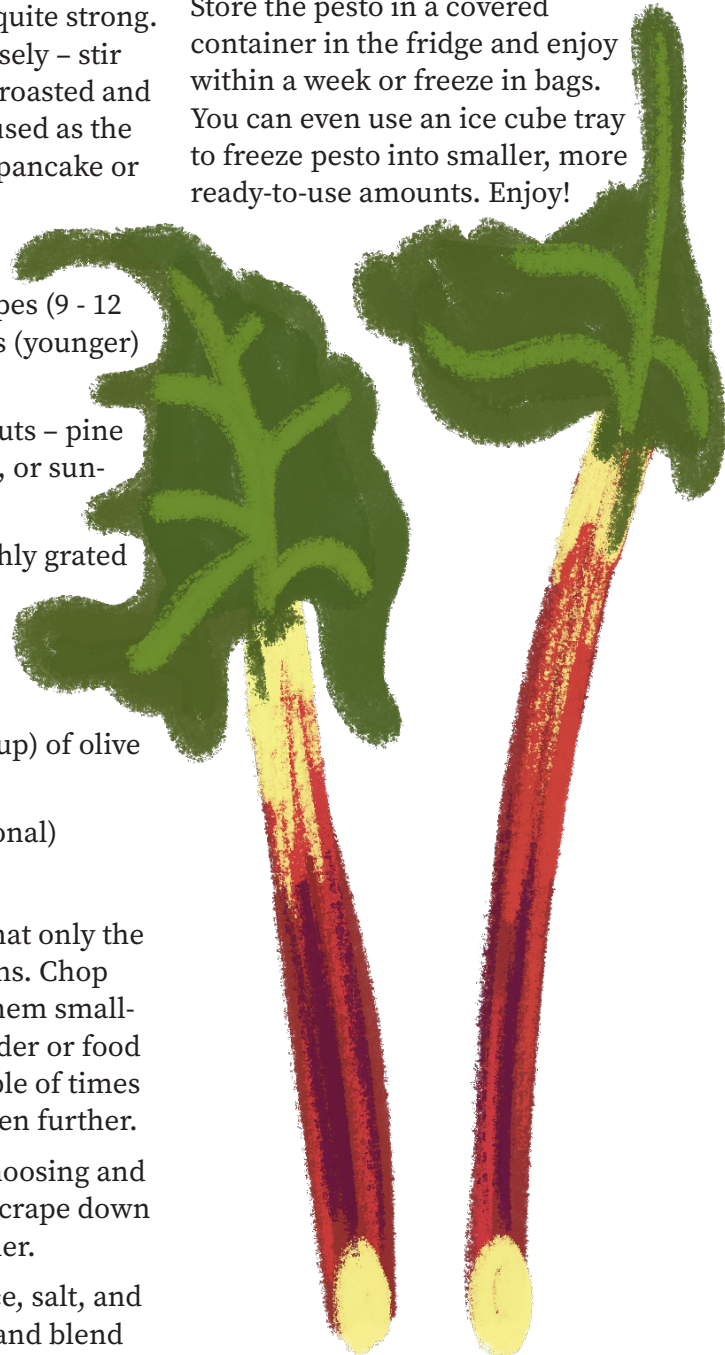
Add the nuts of your choosing and blend for 30 seconds. Scrape down the sides of the container.

Add cheese, lemon juice, salt, and basil if you're using it, and blend together. All ingredients should

combine, but you don't want to go so far that the texture becomes a mush. Scrape down the container again.

With the blender running, slowly drizzle in the olive oil, continuing to process until all the ingredients are incorporated and the pesto has reached the desired consistency (this should take around 1 minute).

Store the pesto in a covered container in the fridge and enjoy within a week or freeze in bags. You can even use an ice cube tray to freeze pesto into smaller, more ready-to-use amounts. Enjoy!



Featured Local Artist: Lexi Benak

@lexislittleartland

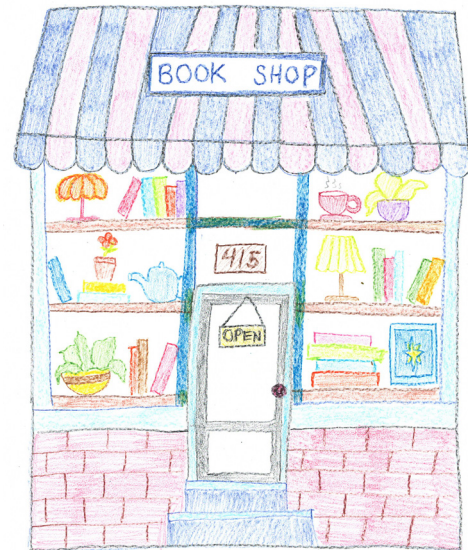
Lexi Benak is an abstract visual multimedia artist. Originally from Slovakia, she has found a home in the Lower Haight this year. Her paintings center the transformation of pain into joy. Her multimedia visual catalogue leads with the gentle strength of vulnerability. In her abstractions, feelings gain shape as boundaries and meanings dissipate.

New Club Alert: The Liminal Shelf

Introducing The Liminal Shelf! A science fiction and fantasy book club, focusing on books by women / queer / BIPOC authors. If you want to make new friends, read good books, and explore interesting ideas this is the book club for you! They'll be meeting at the neighborhood's newest bookstore / cafe, Love Potion Library.

The first meeting will be **Wednesday, June 3rd, 7-9 pm, 284 Noe St.** They'll be discussing *Ancillary Justice* by *Ann Leckie*.

The unique feature of Lexi's art shows (**the next one is May 15th at MASS gallery in Frontier Tower on Market!**) is that you come not only to look, but also contribute to the work on display - this ethos of participatory art runs central to her mission: **using art to help people connect more deeply to both themselves and each other.**



s.ate

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

THE MOTHERS DAY COLLECTION



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FOR 20% OFF
MOTHER'S DAY
ORDERS



Haight Street Between
Filmore & Webster



May Events

Full events listing at lowerhaightlocal.com/events

Page St. Prom

When: Saturday, May 9th

Time: 5-8:30pm

Meeting Spot: Northwest Corner of Page & Baker

Duboce PARKJAM

When: Saturday, May 9th

Time: Noon-5pm

Where: Duboce Park

<https://friendsofdubocepark.org/events-activities/parkjam/>

Outdoor Movie Night: Jurassic Park

When: Saturday May 30th, 2026

Time: Movie begins around 8:30pm

Where: Duboce Park

Date My Friend: Two Events This Month!

May 22nd - Mix & Mingle at the Faight

May 30th - 50+ Date My Friend at Kilowatt

Follow [@datemyfriend.sf](https://www.instagram.com/datemyfriend.sf) on Instagram!



RING SIDE DISH

PAPER RINGS

21. It has four legs and six pockets

22. Woodshop fixture

23. It's on the cutting edge, literally

24. Dentist visit freebie

25. Drought danger

26. Simulated emergency

27. Boring machine

28. President's spokesperson

29. Top job at the UN

30. Rural mart

31. Refund alternative

32. A good one is over 700

33. Outfield feature

34. It may come with meeple

35. Wheel of Fortune or Jeopardy!

36. When the curtain rises

37. Sabbatical

38. Cream or ivory

39. Billy Idol: "It's a nice day for a _____"

40. Symbol of commitment

1. Best seats at a boxing match

2. Potluck contribution

3. Dawn or Joy

4. Type of derby

5. "The Lord of the Rings Trilogy Special Extended Edition", for one

6. Play matchmaker

7. Get the new version

8. Average in school?

9. Basketball position

10. Property protector

11. Action sequence in "Top Gun"

12. First rule: Do not talk about it

13. What makes a gin fizz fizzy

14. Place where the staff were all jerks

15. Ballpoint predecessor

16. Dr. Seuss, for one

17. Kleenex or Clorox

18. Unopened

19. Talking Heads genre

20. Water park attraction

Instructions

Use the clues to fill out the word rings. Every answer is a compound word or two-word phrase and shares one word with the next answer. The first two are provided to help you get started.

DECODER RING

In each set below, the numbers 1 to 9 represent a different letter. Solve the clues and insert each letter in the matching square to discover a word that uses all nine letters.

"She's a 10"

- 649172 is a feature of a mug
- 94368 is a cheesy treat
- 3295 is 1/100

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

"Pair Bonding"

- 72943 is the fourth herb in a song sequence
- 6345 is a truck ... or part of one?
- 936 is the best answer (when on one knee)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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"Pop the champagne"

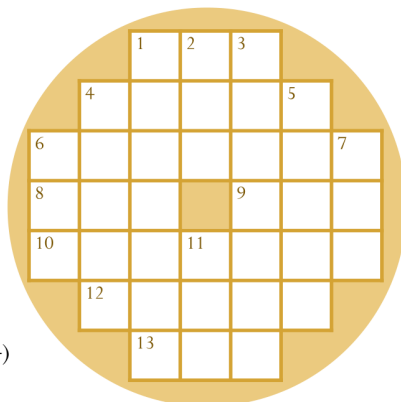
- 59846721 is really hungry
- 35264 is to trim a bush
- 6714 is something you blow or powder

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

DUNK IT

Across

- 1. Something to open when you buy a round
- 4. Breakfast option shaped like this puzzle
- 6. Lotion ingredient derived from wool
- 8. "Raiders of the Lost ____"
- 9. "OMG, you could have spared me those explicit details"
- 10. Home of Lions and Tigers (but not Bears)
- 12. Breakfast option shaped like this puzzle
- 13. "Wheel of Fortune" host Sajak (until 2024)



Down

- 1. Warm-weather wear
- 2. "A long time ____, in a galaxy far, far away..."
- 3. Sing with gusto
- 4. Exposed
- 5. The sky is the ____
- 6. Lass' brother
- 7. Picky concern
- 11. "Messenger" molecule

These games are excerpted from issue 5 of Cozy Cubs Puzzle Club. The Rings theme celebrates the wedding of the author and his number one test solver.

Join us first Wednesdays for Cozy Cubs in Cozy Pubs - cozycubs.club/cozypubs.

