

## A Breath of Fresh Air

Like many Alameda residents, I live in an older home. Ours was built in 1927, or thereabouts. The house is lovely, in my opinion, but it does have one issue. Our windows are original, and many of them don't open. Some have broken sash cords (the cord that connects a weight to the window, holding it steady in the open position), and some have been painted shut. We have looked into having our windows replaced with new wood windows, but we've found it prohibitively expensive. And, this house was built with nice materials – the windows are made of old growth fir and antique glass, so it's hard to imagine throwing them away for something new that couldn't possibly be of the same quality.

That's what brought me to Patty Spencer and her company – Fresh Air Sash Cord Repair. Patty is an engineer by training and learned how to fix sash cord windows by renovating her house. She was surprised by how hard it was at first, but eventually, through trial and error, she mastered the process. She started her company in 1999 and has been a fixture in the community ever since. She donated sash cord repair to Alameda School for their auction when her kids went there, and it was always a popular item.

Patty is EPA certified to control lead paint that is disturbed with the repair of old windows. Most Alameda homes have lead paint - it was widely used on home interiors and exteriors when this neighborhood was developed. Especially if you have kids, it's important to keep lead as contained as possible during any household renovation.

When we met, Patty estimated the cost of fixing one of my windows at \$300 – which is less than half what I was quoted for new windows.

I also had worried that we were losing a lot of heat through our windows, and that might be a reason to replace them, but when we had a guy from the Energy Trust of Oregon come to our house a while back, he said that we weren't losing much energy through our windows – our main energy inefficiencies were (and still are) our uninsulated attic and our 30-year-old furnace. So, fixing a window costs less, is more environmentally responsible, doesn't make a big difference in heat retention (especially if you have storm windows) and maintains the style and integrity of a home. I've had friends in the neighborhood who have had Patty fix their windows, and they've been thrilled with the results. I'm sold – as soon as we have the money (which I'm sure will be any minute now), we're going to have Patty repair our windows. Now, if only she could insulate our attic...