

Life in LAMORINDA



A flock of turkeys take the right-of-way on Saint Mary's Road. Photo by Andy Scheck

Photo by Andy Scheck

Talking Turkey

By Jonathan Glidden

Moraga resident Laurie Bush awoke to a familiar sound: The high-pitched gobbling of turkeys. Thinking they sounded even louder than usual, Bush stepped into her backyard to investigate. There, she encountered thirty-five turkeys, happily pecking away.

To the annoyance of Bush and many other Lamorinda residents, the sight of massive flocks of turkeys is becoming a familiar one. Bush reports that thirty-five is an "average" sized flock, and she has seen up to seventy at one time.

"They are fairly unpleasant" she says, "They come out around dusk. They're big and they smell bad. They defecate all over the yard and sidewalk. They jump up on the roof and break tiles. They are a nuisance."

tive Californian" by state officials. "The abundance of these birds can be attributed to extensive transplant efforts by wildlife biologists and ideal habitat conditions," says Scott Gardner, a wildlife biologist for the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). "Wild turkeys occur about every place we find their habitat."

DFG considers turkeys to be a "highly-valued" species in California, but in recognition of the negative effects the birds are having in some areas, the department released a new management plan in 2003. The plan consists of three main strategies: Discourage the feeding of turkeys, discourage the release of turkeys by private citizens, and reduce turkey populations in areas of chronic nuisance.

The local environ-

ment community is divided on how to handle the turkey issue. "The main comment I get from residents is that they enjoy seeing the turkeys, and are concerned about their well being," said Preserve Lamorinda Open Space Director Suzanne Jones. "I haven't heard complaints about their numbers or their impact on the ecosystem so far."

Moraga Town Council member and Environmental Protection Agency employee Linda Deschambault agrees, saying, "I haven't seen it to be a huge problem. No one has asked the Town Council to do anything." But other communities in Contra Costa County have decided to take action. Walnut Creek retirement community Rossmore hired a state-remembrance hunter to reduce the population with a silenced rifle.

Moraga town officials and groups are reluctant to take such lethal measures. "It's sad because none of these animals asked to



be released here; now that they're here they're just trying to survive," explains Jones. Deschambault expresses a similar sentiment, stressing the need for a balance between making sure the animals are treated ethically and prevented from disrupting native species and becoming invasive.

Fortunately, according to the Department of Fish and Game, lethal measures are rarely necessary. Though the department admits that relocation is expensive and "unlikely to be successful unless conducted persistently," it can reduce numbers in problem areas. In cases of relocation, turkeys will adapt to their new environment and usually remain in the release area.

Fortunately, there are steps that residents can take on their own to help

reduce the turkey problem even without help from the local government. The DFG recently published a set of guidelines for residents dealing with turkeys in urban areas:

Turkey Deterrence

- If turkeys begin feeding under hanging bird feeders, remove the feeders until the turkeys leave the area.
- If turkeys are causing problems in your yard, install motion-detecting sprinklers.
- Wild turkeys typically will not enter yards with dogs.
- If confronted by a wild turkey that has lost its fear of humans, an open umbrella may help steer it out of your path.
- Depredation permits are required to kill wild turkeys that are causing property damage. To get a depredation permit, contact your local Department of Fish & Game office. Jonathan Glidden is a sports and Feature writer for Lamorinda Weekly. He actually gets a kick out of the turkeys.

Lafayette Book Store Launches Book Culture A community approach to bookselling

By Andrea A. Firth

With pressure from mega-bookstores, online outlets, and mass-market discounters forcing the closure of many independent bookstores, Dave Simpson, owner of Lafayette Book Store, knew it was time to make a change.

"We began to envision how selling books could happen in a different way," explained Dave. So in mid-February, at a launch party attended by over 40 customers and staff, Dave unveiled Book Culture—the Lafayette Book Store's Community Membership Club. For a \$10 monthly fee, members receive a 40% discount on all books, overnight delivery on special orders, and access to a variety of

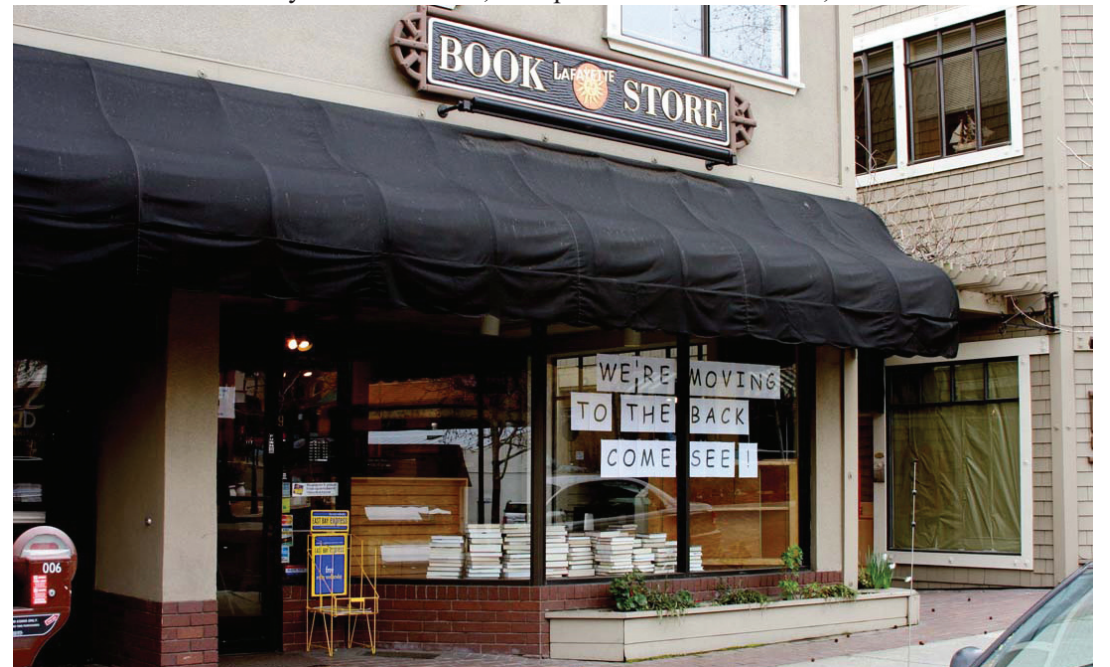
taking off." Book Culture offers members access to a variety of exclusive services including author events, cultural events, community service projects, participation "behind the scenes" at the bookstore, and discounts at local businesses.

"The reception has been almost universally good," reported Dave. Two weeks after launching Book Culture, he had over 100 members—one quarter of the way toward his goal of 400 members by the end of the year.

"Although there are other bookstores that have established membership programs, the discount is less, and there are not as many benefits," explains Dave.

of the store in the past, but one that had become too expensive to support. Already 40% of new members have indicated that they would like to help at author events. And, he plans to organize service projects to help members give back to the community.

Lafayette Book Store—the oldest independent bookstore in Contra Costa County—was on the brink of closing when Dave purchased it nine years ago. Independent bookstores were on the decline with 1,700 stores closing in that year alone. Still, Dave saw an opportunity to fulfill a lifelong dream of owning and operating an independent bookstore, and with some



The Lafayette Book Store moves to a new location, with a new business philosophy to match.

changes, he was able to turn the store around and double the business in two years. In addition, Lafayette Book Store has donated over \$80,000 to local schools, libraries, and area non-profit organizations since Dave has owned the store.

Over the next five years, Dave believes that Lafayette Book Store will become more of a community project. "The community will be much more involved in the running of the store. I will be in the center of it, but people will participate in the store in the areas that motivate them such as author events and community service projects," explained Dave. "It won't be all me. It will become us—the members—driving the action."

community programs along with the high level of service that has become a trademark of the store. Coinciding with the launch of Book Culture, Dave consolidated his new and used bookstores into a single location at the site of the used bookstore (3569E Mount Diablo Boulevard). Dave recruited 25 bibliophiles to form a bucket brigade to move the new bookstore inventory to the new location in less than two hours—a good example of the kind of community support Dave is able to garner with his infectious can-do spirit.

"There is a social/cultural/community service component to Book Culture that makes us a community bookstore in the truest sense," explains Dave, "and that's the part that's really

"Independent bookstores have always been able to succeed because of what they offer in service and community involvement." With Book Culture, his goal is to highlight these strengths and add value by selling books at cost.

"It's all about facilitation," said Dave. He describes his Lamorinda clientele as smart, creative, artistic people, and he enjoys getting them to connect. For example, Dave believes that "people want to consume media and have the chance to discuss it." So, he plans to negotiate group rates at Bay Area theaters and to host a forum after the event for discussion. With the new membership model, Lafayette Book Store will be able to return to hosting author readings—a service that had been a distinguishing feature



Supporters form a "bucket brigade" to help the Lafayette Book Store move to its new location.