

# Life in LAMORINDA



Students work individually with pre-schoolers to build literacy. Photo courtesy of CILSA

## College Jobs Bring Smiles to Children's Faces

By Jennifer Wake

Not many working college students are greeted at their part-time jobs with cheers of adoration, but it is a regular occurrence for Saint Mary's sophomore Sophie Damarel, a team leader in the Jumpstart program. Twice a week 40 Saint Mary's students spend at least two hours a day at Oakland schools, where they invest 300 hours each during the year as a mentor and teacher to a pre-school child.

"[The kids] look up from their lunches and scream, 'It's Jumpstart!'" Damarel said. "We become their friends; it gives them another friend in the classroom. So much more can be done for the kids when it's individualized."

Two years ago, the Saint Mary's Catholic Institute for Lasallian Social Action (CILSA) began partnering with Jumpstart, a national organization that brings at-risk pre-school children and caring adults together to build literacy as well as social and emotional readiness. Working with the children inspired Damarel to change her major from science to education; she now hopes to become a middle school science teacher. For team leader Alicia Torres, the program has taught her about leadership.

"I learned to take myself out of problems, and work things out," Torres said. She sees Jumpstart as a way to offer consistency in some public schools. "When there are a lot of substitutes, Jumpstart becomes the consistent element."

Last month, nearly 40 of the Jumpstart 3-year-olds came to campus with their SMC partners for an afternoon of fun at

the annual Carnival 4 Kids, where 200 children from area schools and organizations that partner with CILSA joined approximately 200 Saint Mary's student "buddies" to enjoy 28 different game and craft booths. More than 600 SMC students volunteered for the day's event.

Carnival co-chair Katie Ferguson says the day offered its own enlightenment. "One child didn't realize that everything was free, because his mom told him nothing in life is free. He was pretty stressed," said Ferguson. Much like the Jumpstart student workers, Ferguson explained that her very presence told these children that they are valuable. "When they come here they realize that we're taking care of them. It's the things that people do for you that are important."

Last night, CILSA honored pre-school teachers, staff and the Jumpstart student workers at a Celebration of Service, which included a showcase of the portfolios that SMC students made of each pre-schooler. "We take anecdotal notes and are very objective about what's going on with child to child interactions, adult/child interactions - we have a whole list of what we're observing," said Damarel. The students turn in their notes and samples of work to the site manager and the entire portfolio is given to families at the end of the year.

"We're able to engage students and build relationships with their families," said Torres, who has enjoyed being part of these children's lives. "It's going to be hard when this is over."

## In Moraga, Change Makes Change

Submitted by Lisa Radcliffe

Local patrons of Cathy Corsi's Si Si Café in Moraga have been making big changes in the Dominican Republic by donating their spare change to a Peace Corp project to pour concrete floors in an impoverished community. Inspired by a recent visit to the Dominican Republic to visit his Peace Corp volunteer brother Kaveh Azimi, Si Si "barista" Kassra Azimi and staff have been enthusiastically raising money to help fund his brother's most current project.

"He's involved in a project to finally bring sanitation and water to the Batay he's living in," said Kassra. "But, his first project is to give these people floors. At least 35 houses in his Batay have only dirt." A Batay, reports Kassra, is a community made up primarily of Dominican's of Haitian descent. "They used to be worker camps for Haitian sugar cane workers", Kassra explained. "Now they are just poor communities in the middle of miles and miles of sugar cane."

Kaveh, a 2002 Campolindo High School graduate is serving as an economic development volunteer. He plans on being in the Dominican Republic until the summer of 2009.

Kassra and his family spent ten days touring the Dominican Republic with Kaveh, and meeting his various "host families." They spent two afternoons touring Kaveh's Batay and meeting the people there. "These people have an extraordinary sense of community,"

Kaveh reported. "People who leave the Batay tend to work outside to improve the Batay. They always come back -one way or another. We have no sanitation, we have only one source of drinking water, we have electricity outages that last weeks, and no indoor plumbing. What we DO have," exclaims Kaveh, "is a great feeling of community involvement. A little money goes a long way here."

"When the rains come," Kaveh reported, "living with dirt floors in addition to our dirt streets, is a nightmare." "Kaveh estimated that it costs approximately \$130 USD per house to pour the concrete floors," reports Kassra. "The labor is donated by the community."

To date Kassra has collected enough money to pour floors for 7 of the 35 homes in need, all through generous donations from our caring coffee drinkers. Most notably, Corsi herself generously donated \$100 to this cause.

While 7 homes is great, 35 would be better. Kassra hopes the donations continue to come in. "I want to let the people of Batay 8 know that the people of OUR community care", said Kassra.

Donations for the Peace Corp floor project may be sent to the Law Office of Radcliffe & Radcliffe, 455 Moraga Road, Suite A, Moraga, CA 94556. Make checks payable to "Radcliffe Attorney Trust Account" with a memo for "Peace Corp Projects" or contact the Peace Corp directly.



Saint Mary's students Whitney Powell and Kaley Smalley

## Cafe Connections

By Sarah Henningsen

Walking around in circles trying to find service for your cell phone is not only frustrating, but also embarrassing. The same goes for laptop computers, which aren't quite as easy to carry around. Thanks to a few cafes in Lamorinda offering Wi-Fi internet access, this should not be a problem anymore. Although there are no real "cyber-cafes" in the area that have public computers anyone can connect to, there are several coffee shops providing this great service to the sleep-deprived, multi-tasking workaholics of Lamorinda.

The Starbucks boom has definitely been beneficial for the millions of internet junkies in the world. The commercial chain store offers T-Mobile HotSpot across the United States and in other parts of North America. At the various Starbucks stores in Lamorinda— in Rheem, in Orinda Theater Square, and two in Lafayette—broadband connections are fast, convenient, and most importantly, free. The hardest part is simply finding a table big enough to fit your shiny computer, venti caramel frapuccino, and jumbo-sized scone.

Café Terzetto in the Moraga Shopping Center is yet another coffeehouse that balances 21st century technology with traditional, to-die-for coffee and meals. Small tables lining the perimeter of the restaurant are perfect for individuals seeking a quick minute to check emails or

to spend an hour working on a business project while still getting a nice dosage of warmth and sunshine. The café serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner throughout the week and also boasts a to-go line for Italian sodas, morning coffee and snacks.

Chow Restaurant, located in the Lafayette Circle near Coldstone Creamery and A.G. Ferrari, has high quality food, ambiance and wireless service. Although the restaurant has only been in existence for a few years, it is always crowded with people seeking meals with the freshest of ingredients. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served daily and the menu often changes throughout the week. A small grocery store also adjoins the main restaurant. For those that cannot handle the noise and energy within the restaurant, there are several tables out on the patio where you can work in relative solitude.

Though rare, coffee shops offering wireless internet connections are a great service to Lamorinda residents. Toting a laptop around may be a hassle for some, but for others these internet cafes present the perfect opportunity to take a break from the boring home office. And isn't it nice, as you sit typing and sipping, to receive a nod and a smile from a similarly-inclined neighbor?

Sarah Henningsen is a feature writer and a student at Campolindo High School.



Kaveh Azimi and friends

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