

# Volunteers: A Key Piece of Lamorinda School Success

By **Andrea A. Firth**

There is a machine in Lamorinda that works quietly, 24/7. It requires hundreds of people to run this machine as it labors tirelessly to organize programs and raise funds. What it achieves in return for its efforts is an excellent education for its children. This machine is the parent volunteer community in the Lamorinda public schools—a community directly linked to the success of the school system.

The strength of the volunteer culture in Lamorinda public schools is evident in the thousands of hours parents volunteer each year to support school programs and fundraising efforts. “We have a strong volunteer culture, and the numbers speak to that,” explains Erin Bydalek, PTA President at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School (JM). Parents at JM in Moraga and Stanley Middle School in Lafayette logged almost 60,000 volunteer hours over the past school year.

“Without our volunteers, the Lamorinda schools would look very different than they do today,” notes Michelle Chan, PTA President at Stanley. Lamorinda

schools receive state funding below the state average, and PTA and parent club funds contribute in an important way to the operating budgets of schools providing Lamorinda students with access to special electives, advanced technology, counseling support, and much more. “Many programs exist in our schools only because of parent support both in terms of monetary donations and time,” adds Anne Mitchell, a member of the PTA Board at Stanley. “In addition to supporting the schools financially, volunteers enrich the academic programs and build community,” states Michelle Chan. “I also volunteer for me,” adds Anne Mitchell, “I like making the school a better place to be, and I like having the opportunity to get to know the administration and what is going on at the school.”

Parents in Lamorinda volunteer at school because they feel that they make a difference. Linda O’Brien, formerly a teacher and school administrator and currently PTA President at Rheem School in Moraga, agrees. “Our volunteer culture is truly what makes our schools different from other schools in

California,” says Linda. She feels that by volunteering for the school, parents send the message that school matters. “We want to make it the best place it can be. We are willing to put time into it, and the teacher is not alone,” she adds, “The parent volunteer support contributes to a child’s sense of school importance...It’s just a happier place to be.

<p><b>Stanley Middle School PTA Honorary Service Awards 2007:</b></p> <p><b>Kathy Brio</b> – Honorary Service Award  <b>Michelle Chan</b> – Honorary Service Award  <b>Teresa Gerringer</b> – Continuing Service Award  <b>Vangie Long</b> – Honorary Service Award  <b>Julie Lyverse</b> – Very Special Person Award  <b>Cheryl Noll</b> – Continuing Service Award</p> <p>Lafayette School Board  <b>(Ann Appert, Teresa Gerringer, Shayne Silva, David Stromberg and Stephanie Teichman)</b> – Honorary Service Award</p> <p>Stanley Office Staff  <b>(Linda Murray, Sandy Shaw, Rosamaria Wellman, Judy Ybarra)</b>          – Honorary Service Award</p>
<p><b>Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Honorary Service Awards 2007:</b></p> <p>Golden Oak Service Award - <b>Lorinda Cunha</b>          Honorary Service Awards - <b>Eliana Cordero, Judy Kienle (Wilson), Ana Ramirez,</b> and staff members, <b>Patti Forster and Fran Strykowski.</b>          Good Volunteer Award - <b>Julie Penfold, Susan Du Boulay,</b> and <b>Peggy Woehleke.</b></p>



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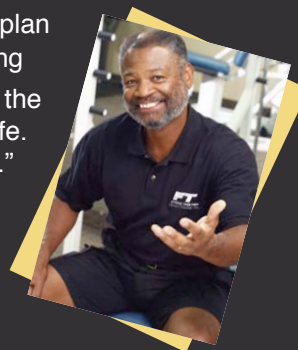
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