



Jefferson, 6, and Jonny, 4, (who has autism) stand at entrance to Burton Valley Elementary in Lafayette

Photo by Jennifer Wake

Special Education Needs By Jennifer Wake

There is a growing shortage of qualified special education credentialed teachers and support staff in public schools – according to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing – and there is a declining trend in both the number of individuals taking the CBEST and in the number of candidates enrolled in teacher preparation programs.

Yet, according to a recent report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the number of children diagnosed with autism served in public schools under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has increased by more than 500 percent in the last decade. Six million children ages 6 to 21 received public special education services in 2005, and that number is closer to seven million today – with a large percentage of those students attending classes in California.

Kathryn Stewart, clinical psychologist and executive director of Orion Academy in Moraga, a nationally-recognized college preparatory high school for children with Asperger's Syndrome or Non-verbal Learning Disorder that targets both individual social needs and academic excellence, says the problem "is big, big, big."

"The reality is there's a huge problem in the state of California about what services are there, and who is trained to do it," Stewart said.

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Serving the New Student Population of Autism

Cal Shakes Day Draws a Crowd to Theater Square

By Lee Borrowman



Cal Shakes actors perform at Theater Square

Theater Square was the place to be last Thursday, May 24, as fans of the California Shakespeare Theater joined a large cadre of officials from the City of Orinda and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce to welcome Cal Shakes and its new satellite ticket office and theater store to Orinda. Artistic Director Jonathan Moscone addressed the crowd, Cal Shakes staff mingled with guests, and actors treated the audience to a lively short performance. The event kicked off the new partnership between Cal Shakes and the City of Orinda, as part of an effort to revitalize the area.

Mayor Steve Glazer invited Orinda Intermediate School students



OIS students delight the crowd

and principal Michael Randall on stage as he recognized OIS and the Cal Shakes Artistic Learning Program.

This spring, artistic residencies were held in all of the OIS 7th grade core classrooms. On June 5th, the entire 7th grade will attend a Student Matinee

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performance of Richard III, and will receive in-class visits from Teaching Artists to prepare them for seeing the show. Student performers were rewarded with a big round of applause from appreciative spectators.

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Governor Schwarzenegger visit to SMC

By Jennifer Wake

No Traffic Tie Ups Expected During

Governor's Visit to SMC

Traffic is expected to be unaffected during a visit to Saint Mary's College by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger on Saturday, June 2, according to college spokesperson Debra Holtz. Although security will be heightened during the governor's visit to SMC, where he will speak at commencement ceremonies for the School of

Extended Education, no road closures are planned.

Only ticket holders will be admitted to the commencement ceremony which begins at 10:30 a.m. in McKeon Pavilion following a Baccalaureate Mass from 8:30 to 9:40 a.m. in the Chapel. A reception will follow at noon in the Soda Center.

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Roadside Displays Symbolize Traffic Safety Struggle

By Steve Angelides

Roadside memorials to young people killed in motor vehicle accidents have become all too familiar a site in Moraga. So far this year there have been three tragic deaths, each of which was followed by a roadside memorial. Two displays within a few blocks of each other on Moraga Road last week symbolized Lamorinda's ongoing struggle with traffic safety.

At the corner of Moraga Rd. and Devin Dr. stood the colorful memorial to Ryan Holt. Holt, a Moraga resident who had just turned 20, died after an accident at that location on May 18. According to preliminary information provided by the Moraga Police Department, he lost control of his motorcycle, crossed into the opposing lanes, and was struck by an approaching vehicle.

The roadside memorial to Holt included a large poster board filled with pictures and e-mail and handwritten messages. In front of the poster board were many bouquets of flowers and a few candles which had apparently been lit during the night. Holt's nickname was "Rye Bread," and several loaves of rye bread were also part of the memorial. The memorial drew a steady stream of visitors last week.

A few blocks down Moraga Rd., near Rheem Blvd., was the Moraga police van. On the side of the police van was a large "Slow Down, Lamorinda!" banner. On the morning of May 21, passers-by noticed something unusual about the police van's banner. Vandals had painted over the "Slow Down" and in its place had scrawled "Speed Up."

Moraga Police Chief Mark Ruppenthal said the police have information on individuals who may have been involved in the vandalism and will be speaking with them. Moraga Mayor Mike Metcalf would like to know why anyone would do such a thing. "Whatever the reason," said Metcalf, "it suggests that something is seriously wrong."

Banners, signs and bumper stickers are part of the education and outreach component of the "Slow Down, Lamorinda!" 12-week traffic safety campaign being conducted jointly by Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda. The campaign also includes targeted speed enforcement, and Moraga Police Sgt. Julie Valdez notes that there is "definitely an increase in enforcement activity in non-target areas as well."

Lee Borrowman contributed to this article.



The memorial to Ryan Holt on Moraga Rd



The vandalized Slow Down banner

Photo by Steve Angelides

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