

Acalanes High School • Burton Valley • Camino Pablo • Campolindo • Del Rey • Donald L. Rheem • Glorietta • Happy Valley •

# Lamorinda Schools

Joaquin Moraga • Lafayette Elementary • Los Perales • Miramonte • Orinda Intermediate • Sleepy Hollow • Springhill • Stanley Middle • Wagner Ranch

## Congratulations Lamorinda Teachers of the Year!

**Yvonne Anast, Mathematics, Orinda Intermediate, Orinda**

"This is my first time (receiving the Teacher of the Year recognition) and I am very honored," said Anast. "I feel happy that I have been able to make a connection with my students."

Anast thinks that the award will only enhance the learning experience of her students.

"My students have high expectations and I know that I will need to continue to provide them with a solid foundation and a keen understanding of math in order to be successful in high school, college and life," said Anast. "I wish for each of them the love of math and the ability to use [it] where they see fit."

-N. Lossing

**Scott Turner, 3rd Grade, Burton Valley Elementary, Lafayette**

Scott Turner says, "The greatest reward in my profession isn't receiving the best standardized test score. I believe there is no greater reward than seeing a student's self-esteem flourish. Year after year, there are reluctant students that enter my classroom. Some are shy, some feel they are not smart enough to perform in front of their peers, or some are fearful of making mistakes. I work hard to ensure my students feel good about their accomplishments. My reward comes from setting up a healthy environment where my students are more focused on the positive aspects of their peers, and they work together as a team to embrace social and academic growth."

-C. Tyson

**Leann Pfeiffer-Nixdorff, 5th grade, Camino Pablo Elementary, Moraga**

Children in Ms Pfeiffer's (now Mrs. Nixdorff) class at Camino Pablo remember a very special classroom atmosphere where experimenting and learning with peers felt safe and productive. Ms. Pfeiffer, who has been teaching for 11 years in the Moraga district, is well known by staff, parents and children for her enthusiasm for teaching and the way she prepares children for entering middle school by fostering dependability, responsibility and cooperation. Her love for children and keen understanding of each child's special gifts and abilities make her a perfect recipient of the teacher of the year award.

-S. Bracinni

**Molly Henrikson, History, Campolindo, Acalanes Union High School District**

Currently teaching both World History and AP European History, Henrikson is well known for her unique approach to teaching seemingly bland topics. By using simulations of historic trials and other fun activities, Henrikson has a knack for connecting both intellectually and emotionally with her students. Upon winning the prestigious award, Henrikson commented, "I feel very honored and humbled by the recognition. The district has many excellent teachers and to be singled out is a true honor. Additionally, I am thankful to have had such wonderfully engaging and challenging students while teaching at Campo - the learning process has been reciprocal."

Ms. Henrikson is a finalist in the Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year competition.

-S. Henningsen



Scott Turner



Molly Henrikson

## 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 admin-

istration 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.

### Stanley Middle School PTA Honorary Service Awards 2007:

Kathy Brio – Honorary Service Award  
Michelle Chan – Honorary Service Award  
Teresa Geringer – Continuing Service Award  
Vangie Long – Honorary Service Award  
Julie Lyverse – Very Special Person Award  
Cheryl Noll – Continuing Service Award  
Lafayette School Board  
(Ann Appert, Teresa Geringer, Shayne Silva, David Stromberg and Stephanie Teichman) – Honorary Service Award  
Stanley Office Staff  
(Linda Murray, Sandy Shaw, Rosamaria Wellman, Judy Ybarra) – Honorary Service Award

### Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Honorary Service Awards 2007:

Golden Oak Service Award - Lorinda Cunha  
Honorary Service Awards - Eliana Cordero, Judy Kienle (Wilson), Ana Ramirez, and staff members, Patti Forster and Fran Strykowski.  
Good Volunteer Award - Julie Penfold, Susan Du Boulay, and Peggy Woehleke.

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## In the Footstep of Pioneers

By Andréa Lucacher, 4th grade, Camino Pablo

It was very early in the morning one Monday in May when 3 buses took all the 4th graders from Camino Pablo Elementary on a trip into the past, when gold was first found in California. The 2 hour bus drive felt short. We arrived at an old railroad station near Jamestown.

We went gold panning in the American River. We wore long black rubber boots made for men. We had a round black pan, about 11 inches in diameter, flat bottom, and the sides were about 3 inches high. There was a big pile of soil freshly dug with gold inside. In order to get the gold, you fill your pan with soil then you put the whole pan in the water and wash out all the

dirt, take all the big rocks out, until you see the nuggets. It was very painful to lean over and scoop water from the river.

After the gold hunt, we went to our camp in Silver Spur. 4 big orange cabins are set in a large meadow surrounded by pine and oak trees. There are hills in the back for hikes and a big field to play. A river runs through it, but we couldn't get in. We slept in bunkbeds in the cabins. The classes took turns setting and cleaning up in the dining hall. The food was not what my mom would call "healthy", but it was the kind I love: spaghetti and chocolate cake.

The next morning, we left after breakfast. We went



Camino Pablo 4th graders panning for gold in the American River

to Columbia, an old village like in the 1840's. We visited a blacksmith, a candy shop, a school and a jail.

But my favorite part was taking a ride in a horse carriage. I sat on top and it was unbelievably bumpy but fun! We were attacked by a robber, he had a pistol and he asked me for my gold earrings. My dad had to fight with him... just kid-

ding! It was simply fake.

We came back in the afternoon. I think the adults had as much fun as us, the children. I felt it must have been very hard work for the adults a long time ago, but I think that children of that time had as much fun in their village as we do in Moraga today.

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