

**A Conversation With Moraga-Orinda Fire District Chief Pete Nowicki**  
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Pete Nowicki

Absolutely. We looking for intelligent, articulate people who can pass the nationwide test requirements, but who are also street smart, have life experiences and other outside skills like, say, welding or changing their own motor oil.

**How has the relationship between the District and the community changed since you started?**

I'd say that it's become more professional and less like an extended family. Back then many of the fire fighters lived in Moraga and had grown up there. So, if you went out on a medical call and didn't know the patient, another person on your crew might. That kind of familiarity has disappeared because the populations of Moraga and Orinda have grown and become much more transient.

**What do you see as the challenges the District now is facing and how are you planning to address them?**

First, we are in the process of getting our retirement funds out of the County system, which is

bleeding us dry, and putting them into the State system. Every month our share of the County's unfunded liability increases by \$50,000-\$70,000. Second, we have to provide full time staffing for the ambulance at Station 45 in Orinda. In the budget I have presented to the Board, I propose phasing this in over three years. The first year we would increase our staffing by calling in paramedics to work overtime. The second year we would hire three more personnel, and the third year we would hire another three more. In the longer term, however, our biggest challenge, like for all public service agencies, is that of general funding. That is, the District is funded primarily by residential property taxes, and while this revenue source will remain fairly constant, our costs for apparatus, competitive wages, utilities, workers' compensation, medical coverage, retirement, etc. will only increase over the years.

**Nowadays, how is the public involved with the District, and how would you like to see this increase?**

We have a much closer relationship with our residents than most fire districts in terms of people dropping in to talk with us or attending our open houses and pancake breakfasts. And there's the Res-

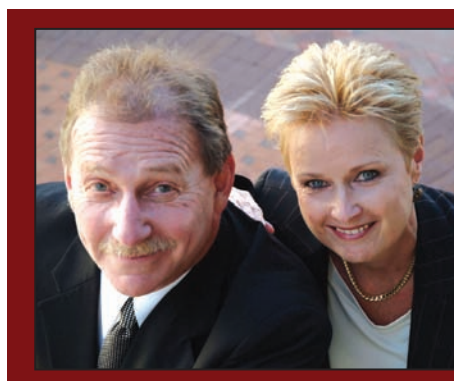
cue One Foundation. I cannot believe how generous our residents have been through this program.

As for greater involvement, when voting for their Fire District Director, people should take some time to look into the platform that person is running on, rather than just voting carelessly.

Another way is to get involved with the fire safety principles we espouse such as having safe vegetation clearance around your home and having a non-combustible roof and non-combustible siding. They can also enhance community safety by learning CPR or getting CERT (Citizen Emergency Response Team) training.

Also, our Board of Directors meetings are open to the public and, especially now during budget time, people are welcome to come to these meetings to make sure that we're spending their money wisely. Anyone can find out about these things on our website, MOFD.org.

Jonathan Goodwin is a catastrophic fire prevention activist who serves as Central Coordinator for the Canyon Fire Council, as Board Secretary for the Diablo Fire Safe Council and will soon become an instructor for Lamorinda CERT.



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**Marlins and Seahorses Splash Off**  
Submitted by Ric Notini, President of Orinda Moraga Pool Association

The Moraga Valley Pool (MVP) Marlins swim team began their dual meet season last Saturday morning with an away meet against the Las Trampas Seahorses. With less than 80 swimmers just three years ago, MVP continues its rise in the Lamorinda community's competitive swimming league, featuring a club record 233 swimmers this year.

The team that swam on Saturday had a great range of age and experience, from Shurveen Najafi, 5, who swam his first meet on Saturday after graduating from the Mini Marlins program, to seasoned 18-year-old vet-

eran Stefan Miller (fresh from his Campo Senior All-Night), who has been swimming at MVP since he was 6-years-old. Adam Schaffer, 17, broke the 1978 Las Trampas Pool record in the 15-18 100 yard Individual Medley with a time of 59.22.

Over the next two months, the Marlins will compete in 15 swim meets against other Lamorinda clubs. In addition, MVP has earned the right to swim in the Orinda Park Pool's Relay meet for the first time in over a decade, having finished fifth in the OMPA Championship meet last year.



Shurveen Najafi Age 5, first swim meet

The Marlins are coached by Kevin Lai and Jon Cravotto, along with 20 assistant coaches. One of the unique features of summer swim team is the chance for brothers and sisters ranging in age from 3 to 18 to be part of and compete as one team, and cheer for each other.

But the MVP experience isn't limited to swimming laps in practice and achieving personal bests in meets. This year's MVP season seems more like a summer camp program. Planned activities include Pilates for Parents, a camping trip at UC Berkeley's Lair of the Bear campground near Yosemite, and many more social events throughout the summer.



Paige Miller and Claire Manrique go head to head in the 10 and Under Girls 50 yard breaststroke event.

**A Dream Comes True**

**at Moraga Ranch**

Submitted by Tom vonNovak, President of Moraga Ranch, edited by Jennifer Wake



Grand Opening Party, May 25

Photos Andy Scheck

After a major remodeling effort that included a new six-lane pool and equipment, shade structures, timing system with digital score-board, sound and lighting system, barbecue area and pool furniture, Moraga Ranch Swim Club held its Grand Re-Opening celebration on Friday, May 25 with over 350 in attendance.

What started out as a discussion to replace an aging five-lane pool, ended up including Trex Decking, a viewing area, upgraded restrooms, pump houses, sprinkler system fences, concrete decking.

"As one of the smaller clubs in the Lamorinda community, it was a daunting challenge when we first began to examine replacing our pool," said Tom vonNovak, President of Moraga Ranch. To bring it to fruition, the Ranch would need the board and membership to step up and take over a significant role in the ac-

tual construction of the facility outside of the pool itself.

"We broke ground in late January 2007 and every weekend from that point forward, eight to 10 hours a day, you could find five to 25 volunteers of all ages working on any one of a dozen or more tasks on hand," said vonNovak. "Not only did we exceed our own expectations but we came in on time and on-budget. Our contractor Steve Santoro of Swan Pools could not have been any more professional, thorough and dependable from day one. I am extremely proud of both the board and the entire membership for supporting this undertaking and following through."

When you add some luck to the equation regarding the weather, the dream became reality. Founded in 1963, the New Moraga Ranch Swim Club 2007 is now open!

**OMPA is a Family Affair**

By Jennifer Wake

The Orinda Moraga Pool Association (OMPA) opened its 51st season June 3, with families joining for a kick-off barbecue. With approximately 1,600 swimmers in teams throughout Lamorinda, the OMPA has become a community within the greater community.

Ric Notini, president of OMPA, says belonging to the organization is not only about swimming and competing, but "it's a great social environment."

"It involves the entire family," he said. "They're all learning the value of working hard and can see the direct results of their effort, through sportsmanship, team camaraderie, spirit, and competition." The opening gave long-time swim team families a chance to reconnect.

"We all look forward to the start of swim season. Since we don't all have kids in the same schools, it's fun to see all the families again," said Amy Meckfessel, whose family has belonged to the Sleepy Hollow Swim and Tennis Club in Orinda for seven years. "The older swimmers and coaches are people we want our kids to look up to and emulate."

Many parents of swimmers, who range in age from 3 to 18 in the 10 recreational teams throughout Orinda and Moraga, belonged to OMPA when they were children and have continued the tradition with their own families. The season will culminate with the OMPA Championship meet on August 3, 4, and 5 at the Soda Aquatic Center at Campolindo High School.



Photos Gavin Schlissel



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