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Improving Family Relationships

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

In my work with couples and families, I often see situations where people have been "beating their heads against the wall." This is because we all develop patterns of thought and behavior that cause us to repeat ourselves, despite the realization that it is getting us nowhere. Couples nag and criticize each other about the same old issues. Parents repeat themselves with their children, hoping maybe one day their children WILL finally put away their toys or do their homework or clean up their rooms. Teens often just turn off to their parents rather than participating in arguments that never get resolved.

Sometimes there are deep-seated issues that can only be addressed with ongoing therapy, but often it is possible to handle these impasses within the family. When you are locked into these sorts of battles, it's time to step back and work on forming an agreement. It's a problem-solving approach that involves compromise, but in a way where

no one has to lose.

To take a common example, Denise and Scott are highly frustrated with their son, Chris, age 12. Chris has begun to neglect his homework, his room, and his younger brothers. Instead, he spends most of his time in his room either listening to music or on the computer. Both parents have tried asking, encouraging, complaining, and finally ordering Chris to comply with their requests. Nothing seems to make a difference. Chris becomes increasingly defiant and resentful.

Denise and Scott decide to re-group and try a different strategy, a more solution-based approach. They ask Chris when would be a good time for them to talk with him. When they meet, both parents talk to Chris about what they appreciate about him and what they miss in their relationship with him. They ask Chris to tell them what he thinks they could do or say differently, promising no recriminations. They don't repeat their complaints. The objective is to promote under-



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a marriage and family therapist with offices in Orinda and Walnut Creek.

standing and good will, not to continue criticizing.

Depending on the level of distrust and resentment a child has developed, this process may need to be repeated several times before he is ready to cooperate. Then it is time to hammer out some agreements. When there is a "buy-in," there can be more progress. And when the agreement hits an inevitable snag, all parties can meet again to determine how they can get back on track. Working together toward an agreement can help diffuse emotionally-charged situations and promote closer relationships.

New Parks & Rec Director - Ready to Jump into Work

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Town Manager Phillip Vince, who hired Ingram, said he was "absolutely thrilled" that Ingram was coming to work for Moraga, and that Ingram had "very extensive experience for the position and great letters and references." In addition, because of Ingram's service on the Alameda Recreation and Park Commission, Vince said Ingram "can see both sides of the issues, which is a huge plus."

Ingram will start work for on September 4. Vince

said Ingram is coming at a "very important time" because Moraga is taking over responsibility for its own recreation programs after several years of a partnership with Lafayette. Vince also plans to assign Ingram responsibility for the Town's open space, which comprises 51% of the Town's area.

Although Ingram has not yet officially started work, he is already busy reviewing the most recent draft of the Parks and Recre-

ation Master Plan, which was printed in July. The Master Plan is scheduled to be presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission in September and to the Town Council for approval in October.

Ingram has an undergraduate degree from Cal Poly in San Louis Obispo in Recreation Administration, and a Masters in Public Administration from the University of San Francisco. He lives in Alameda with his wife and daughters.

New Development in Moraga - Let Your Voice Be Heard

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"We invite you to continue to be engaged in the process," said Planning Director Lori Salamack at the first scoping meeting.

The large parcel of land in question is basically the area north of School Street, currently occupied by the Moraga Ranch buildings and adjacent orchard area south of Camino Ricardo.

The citizens in attendance at the August 6th meeting were plenty concerned about the development. Some of the comments included concerns about traffic on Camino Ricardo, additional students in Moraga schools,

concern about additional retail space (approximately 90,000 square feet has been proposed - that's the equivalent of 2 additional Safeway's) and about the number of housing units. In addition, Moraga-Orinda Fire District Chief Pete Nowicki stated his concern regarding the loss of training area for firefighters, and an Orinda City Council member was concerned about potential impact on Orinda roads.

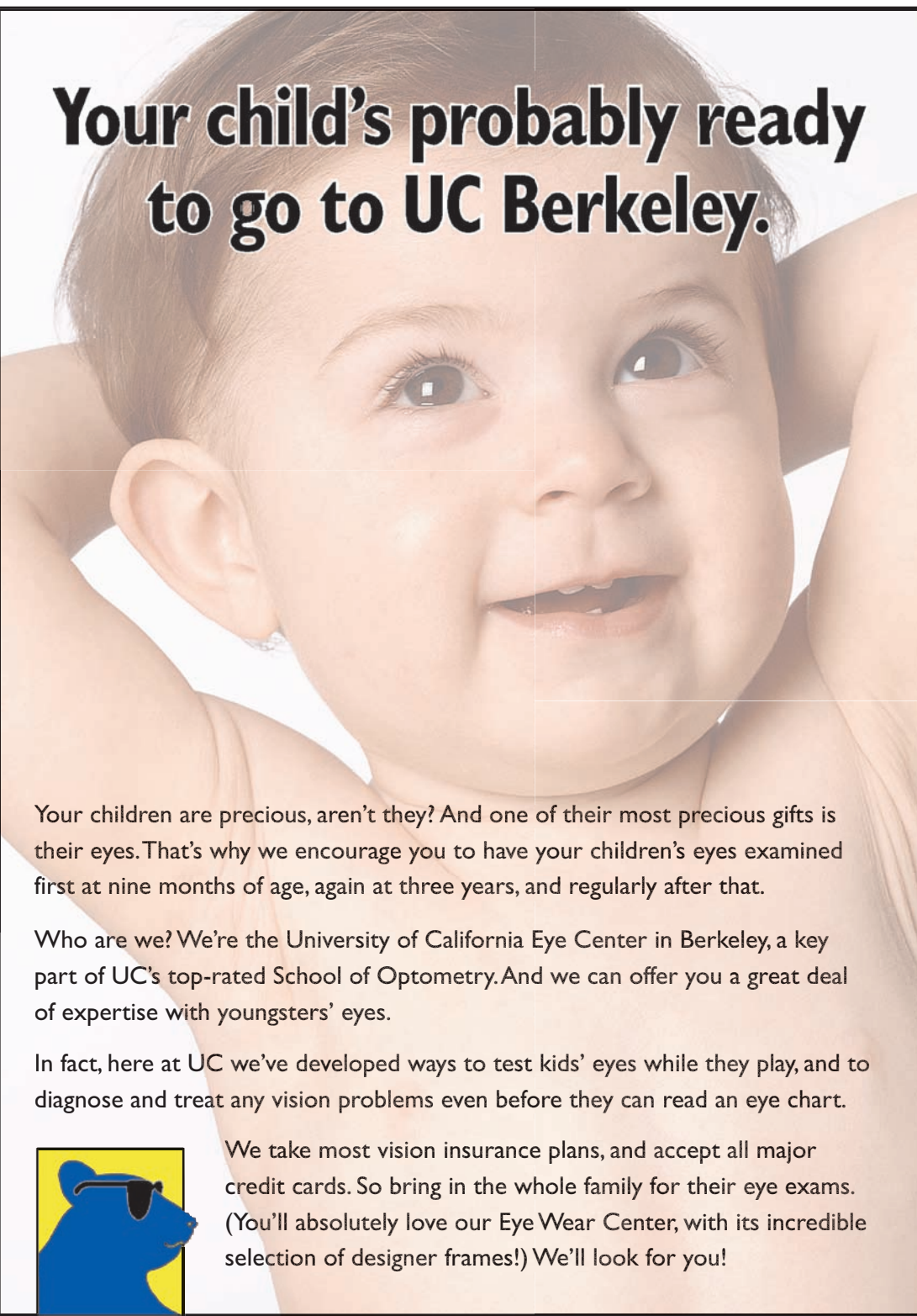
Written comments will be accepted through September 4. Lamorinda residents can comment by attending the upcoming

September 4th meeting, via e-mail to planning@moraga.ca.us or by regular mail:

Town of Moraga
Planning Department
329 Rheem Boulevard,
Suite 2; Moraga, CA 94556
Attn: Moraga Center
Specific Plan

For more information, please see the full Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Moraga Center Specific Plan at www.moraga.ca.us/documents/Planning/MCSP%20NOP%20072607.pdf

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