

First Day Excitement!

"My daughter ripped it open, and started screaming, she was thrilled she had Mr. Dow for third grade" reports Karen Englund of daughter Jenna. The kids start networking right then and there, the question of the day being, "who do you have?" Kindergartners have a bit of a different start than the older kids. Wednesday is orientation day, where kinders come in groups of five for an hour with one or both parents to check out their new classroom. "It makes the transition a little less stressful," says teacher Dianna Burns. "They get to explore their new environment, and find their cubby." Thursday the 30th is

their first "full" day, class starts at 8:00 and goes until 11:30. For the balance of the students, most were eagerly anticipating the new school year. "Jenna was counting the days for about the last three weeks, prepping her outfit and dreaming of getting Mr. Dow. She was over the moon, incredibly excited." When asked how she felt as a parent about school starting this year, Englund replied, "dancing in the street. I'm happy they're happy," referring to Jenna and son Nolan, a new Orinda Intermediate School student. Chris Dow does have a reputation as a celebrity around campus,

... continued from page 1 because prior to this year, he was the science instructor. "It was an exciting day, and it went by very fast," notes third grade teacher Dow. He has nineteen students in his class. "It helps to have most of the kids know me. I felt flattered that they were excited. It was a big day." "We had a good smooth start today," said Principal Janis Americh. "Everything went like clockwork. I was really pleased with the electronic registration system. This was my first try with Jumpstart, and it went quite smoothly. We did have to scramble with a new building and playground equipment, but everyone rallied to finish up."

Paul Caccamo's Last Postcard

By Lee Borrowman

On August 20, the "Hiker Guy," as he has been known around the offices of your friendly neighborhood newspaper all summer, sent his final postcard. After three months and 1600 miles of walking, local music teacher Paul Caccamo decided to leave the Pacific Crest Trail and bring his worn and weary feet home. "The journey," he wrote, "even though unfinished, was an incredible experience. Leaving my house in April with only a backpack and the clothes I wore to get me through the next five months was a daunting moment. It makes one realize how little we actually need to survive. Sleeping under the stars every night; in 177 days I only pitched my tarp 5 times -- that's very nice. Getting into my warm bag on a cold night after walking 23 miles; pure heaven. The amazing generosity of complete strangers. Town stops and total gluttony; it's just good clean fun. Best of all, the people; the 'thru-hiking community' so to speak. They are the most colorful group of characters I have ever met. I don't mind not finishing this year so much, but I miss my friends like crazy, especially Filthy Figaro, with whom I walked over 1300 miles. Things I will not miss, because I must be 'fair and balanced:' Yellow jackets after my sandwich at lunchtime. Mosquitoes. Messed-up feet. The scorching San Felipe Hills, 110 degrees at 11:00a.m. Teddy Bear Cholla cactus; I kicked a piece of one and it felt like a sword had been



"The Germinator" (Zack Mermel) and Paul Caccamo atop Forester Pass, the highest point on the Pacific Crest Trail Photo provided

thrust through my foot. At a pace of 25 miles a day one doesn't get to stop much and enjoy a particular place, there is always that clock ticking that says 'Canada isn't getting any closer while you're hanging out by this lake all afternoon.' I have a long list of places along the PCT that are ripe for a more relaxed stay. This was not a relaxing journey, but it was some of the most fun I have ever had." Caccamo plans to walk the Oregon and Washington miles of the trail next June and July, on fresh feet. Feeling somewhat like we've just finished a great summer read, with all the ambivalence of having enjoyed the story but wondering what's next, we here at the Lamorinda Weekly hope he will keep us on his mailing list.

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Proposed High School Calendar Rocks Lamorinda

By Sophie Braccini

The Acalanes Union High School District's (AUHSD) Governing Board failed to approve the proposed 2008-2009 academic calendar at when it met on August 29th. Kathy Coppersmith and Vanessa Crews voted in favor of the new calendar, while Tom Mulvaney and Richard Whitmore were opposed. Judy Carney, who would have been the tie-breaking vote, was absent. The future of the calendar remains ambiguous at this time while Superintendent Jim Negri determines the appropriate course of action. The proposed calendar was designed to reduce students' stress and maximize their learning experience by equalizing the length of the two semesters, ending the first semester before the winter break. To achieve this, the school year would start a week earlier, on August 18th

2008, and would end on June 5th, 2009. The number of instructional days would remain the same. Serious discussion around rendering the calendar more suited to student needs began during the 2005-2006 school year. In 2006-2007, the proposed modifications were the subject of negotiation with the Abalones Education Association (AEA), and the public at large lost sight of the issue. The proposed calendar was accepted by the AEA. Teachers believe that having students take first semester exams before the winter break will allow them to enjoy a more peaceful, relaxing vacation and will result in a more efficient January. In addition, Advanced Placement (AP) exams would take place in late May thereby eliminating the "dead week" after the AP exam and giving those students an extra study week during the year.

Many parents spoke against the proposal, challenging the District's position that it would reduce student stress, and arguing that changing the calendar would create conflicts in families that have students in elementary or intermediate schools. It is not known if other local school districts would revise their calendars to conform to AUHSD's, and parents had concerns about the potential disruption to family vacations. Some suggested that different district schedules would drive parents to pull kids out of school, which would result in a loss of state funds. Others were displeased with the way the project had been conducted, and reminded the Board that parents are their constituency and should have been polled and/or involved. Detailed information can be found at <http://www.acalanes.k12.ca.us>

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Who Will Be The Next Orinda Idol?

By Lee Borrowman

On Sunday, September 9, the thirty-five finalists for the title of 2007 Orinda Idol will sing their hearts out at the Orinda Theater. Performances begin at 11:00am. As in a certain other Idol contest, finalists will be judged by performance professionals and audience vote -- come cheer and vote for your favorite rising star! Orinda Idols will be chosen in four grade categories. Admission is free. Winners will be announced at 5:15pm.

Daniels, Ben Freeman, Suvi Gluskin, Erika Goeriz, Nicola Vann

Preliminary judging resulted in Runner-Ups being named in two grade groups, who will serve as alternates for finalists in those groups who are unable to compete on Sunday:

Grades 3-5: Julie Meckes (1st), Anna Finnell (2nd);

Middle School: Sarah Brovelli (1st), Sophie Woodlee (2nd)

Emcees: Diane Dwyer, NBC11; Anna Werner, CBS5; Leslie Brinkley, ABC7

Judges: Matthias Montgomery, Drummer & Vocalist, SPAZMATICs
Cesar Cancino, Musical Director, Palazzo & Formerly of Teatro Zinzanni
Svetlana Nikitenko, Opera Singer, SF Opera & Teatro Zinzanni
Amy Potozkin, Casting Director, Berkeley Rep Theatre

Orinda Idol is a project of the Orinda Arts Council (www.orindaartscouncil.org), and is sponsored by the Contra Costa Certified Farmers' Markets (<http://www.cccfm.org/>)

The schedule and performers:

K-2 Grade, 11:00-12:00
Lauren Bond, Amanda Bovoso, Aisling Holton, Sophia Li, Makenna Millham, Jackie Patton, Jocelyn Purcell, Tessa Viola, Zoe Warch

3-5 Grade, 12:30-1:30
Nolan Englund, Maritza Grillo, Sean McFeely, Amrita Newton, Emma Patton, Claire Restrepo, Erin Schoenfeld, Cole Skeffington, Stephanie Sloves, Alina Whatley

6-8 Grade, 2:00-3:15
Matthew Barber, TJ Barber, Ryan Buchanan, Faith Engstrom, Grace Hilty, Katie Marino, Neris Newton, Steven Patton, Hannah Tennant, Sophie Wegener

9-12 Grade, 3:45-4:45
Sarah Ames, Max Coleman, Alexis

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