

# Volunteerism Keeps Lamorinda Humming

By Jennifer Wake

Volunteers can be the lifeblood of a community. From service clubs, to religious groups, to non-profit organizations and foundations, countless hours are logged by tireless Lamorinda volunteers every day. And the help does not go unnoticed.

Head librarian, Susan Weaver, says she wouldn't be able to do what she does without the help at the Lafayette Library. "We couldn't do any of our programs or could not function without our volunteers," she said. "The Friends of the Library underwrite all of our programming costs, if we have a paid performer, flyers, and big programs like Lamorinda Reads. And we have hundreds of volunteers who route books, re-shelve, and clean. They say it takes a village to raise a child. I guess it takes a village to run a library."

According to Friends of the Lafayette Library coordinator Sally Bellenger, the group of 35-40 volunteers who work in the book room in various capacities raise an average of \$50,000 a year. Through their efforts since its inception in 1967, the Friends have been able to donate \$750,000 to the new library building.

Yet it can be back-breaking work. Each week, approximately 2,000 books are dropped off in donations, and volunteers must carry the books from the curb to the book room at the Lafayette Community Center.

"At the moment, we have over 40,000 books for sale in the book room," said Bellenger.

Why do they do it? It's simple: "We love libraries and love books," she said. This type of passion seems to be the catalyst that drives many volunteers.

Moraga resident Bill Durkin began volunteering at age 14, teaching swimming lessons. "I guess that stuck, since I've been doing volunteer work ever since," he said.

Currently Durkin is a docent at Bedford Gallery. He has served as president of Sustainable Moraga for two years, is a member of the California Emergency Response Team (CERT), and works in the Community Garden.



Boy Scout Troup 200 members Joshua Koenigsberg, Ramez Jweainat, and Zack Lewis of Lafayette hand fliers out promoting e-waste collection to patrons of the Lafayette Art and Wine Festival

Photo by Jennifer Wake



Friends of the Lafayette Library volunteers Doris Duncan, Sally Bellenger, and Pat Boyer prepare for another book sale in the Book Room at the Lafayette Community Center

Photo by Jennifer Wake

"I find volunteering rewarding in many ways," he said. "It's a way of taking the edges out of thinking you are so different from others, and I learn a lot about myself when volunteering for groups like a suicide and crisis center."

A former teacher, Durkin believes that "if you work at something a little each day (or week), you can get things accomplished, and then get a sense of achieving your goals."

For others, just finding how their skills fit a need is a fulfilling experience.

Lafayette resident Bruce Veenstra knows lighting. When his church decided to upgrade their lighting system to be more eco-friendly, he calculated the costs and benefits of a lighting efficiency upgrade, and plans to use a week of his own vacation time to install more than 200 energy efficient devices such as T8 fluorescent tubes, electric ballasts, fixtures, CFL, motion sensors and their control units, at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lafayette.

Volunteers at the Orinda Arts Council also bring their professional skills to the table by organizing exhibits in the Orinda Library Art Gallery, supporting special arts programs in Orinda schools, and lobbying for additional arts programs in the community.

John Spahr, a Scout Master in Lafayette, simply wanted to help with his church's e-waste collection day. He volunteered to give up two weekends (along with boys from Cub Scouts Pack 200 and Boy Scouts Troop 200) to distribute flyers for the event at the Lafayette Art and Wine Festival and at the Walnut Festival in Walnut Creek.

For Durkin, volunteering is a way to give back. "I once purchased a ceramic bowl that read around the outer rim, 'tickle the earth with a hoe and it will laugh with a harvest.' Volunteering is somewhat along the same thought," he said. "To help something (an idea, cause or solution) grow."

At the library, Weaver is amazed by her volunteers. "They don't ask for recognition and expect nothing in return. They give and give and give," she said. "We just love them to pieces."



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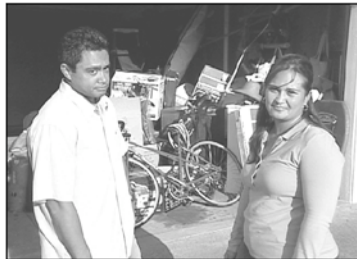
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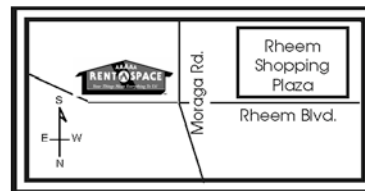
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