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The Pumpkin Patch, an Orinda Tradition

By Lee Borrowman

It just wouldn't be October without it. Since 1973, the Del Rey Elementary School Pumpkin Patch has been the favorite place to purchase those jack-o-lantern wanna-be's. This year's Pumpkin Patch will be held on Saturday, October 13, from 12:00-3:00 at Del Rey, 25 Camino Moraga. The admission fee of \$7.50/person gets you all of the fun and games.

The Pumpkin Patch was not always the extravaganza it is today. Its origins were far more humble. Peggy Manrique, veteran Pumpkin Patch Coordinator, explains: "In 1973, the Pease family, who had children at Del Rey, donated some pumpkins from their small ranch in Napa County. The pumpkins were sold as a fundraiser. From 1973-1987, they donated the pumpkins to the school and Pumpkin patch was just that - pumpkins for sale.

Over the years, Pumpkin Patch evolved. Manrique continues, "The idea to have a family get together in conjunction with the pumpkin sales came about in the early 1980's and a small group of families attended a Thursday evening Ice Cream So-

cial. The following year, they added some games and pizza and it was a smashing success. The principal at that time, Rita Wolneck, asked organizer Diana Hood if she would be willing to run the event the following year. Diana responded 'Yes, if we can schedule it on a Saturday and expand it to a full-scale carnival-sized event.'"

"The games at the first carnival weren't much different from those offered today," Manrique explains, "and included the Fishing Hole, Pinewood Derby, Cake Walk, Big Card Spin and of course, pumpkin sales. We have a bake sale that features delicious home made baked goods and a

Crazy Cake decorating contest. We've added a giant 90-foot inflatable slide and maze, and the 5th grade dunk tank. Prizes are awarded at most booths. This year, by popular demand, we are adding some booths especially for the younger crowd of future Del Rey students. Tempting treats and a BBQ lunch will be available for purchase."

Manrique has been the Pumpkin Patch Coordinator for three years. Now in her last year as Coordinator, she reflects on the unique nature of the event: "Pumpkin Patch has been the source of many fond memories for parents and students. It's not only an important part of our

fundraising efforts, it's great day of fun for the entire family. We all reflect on the good feeling that come from seeing families enjoying each other and their community in a good, old-fashioned home-spun environment. That's what makes Pumpkin Patch so special."

Pumpkin Patch raises about \$10,000 each year to support programs at the school that are funded entirely by the Parents' Club such as art, music, science and math in the garden. All of the work is done by volunteers, including student members of the "Others First" club at Orinda Intermediate School who come down to lend a hand.



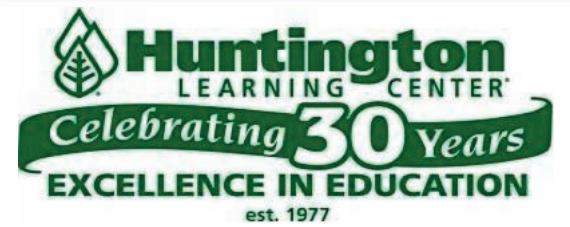
Giant Slide

Julia Gomes, Pumpkin Patch 2006

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After-School Activities Not Only Fun, But Therapeutic

By Jennifer Wake



Tracy and Elizabeth, Xenophon

carry out a sequence of unfamiliar actions. In short: to do what one needs and wants to do. Difficulty in this area can result in children looking clumsy.

Large muscle activities like martial arts, gymnastics or swimming can help with self-regulation. "Kids with ADHD really benefit from activities and sports that provide heavy input to muscles and joints. They are better able to do homework and are in a little calmer place. The worst thing for a student with SPD is to be penalized away from recess," said Hubner-Levin.

Although there has been an increase in understanding and support of ADHD, autism, and SPD in local schools, some teachers continue to pull recess time away from students as a form of discipline when they misbehave. "They need big muscle activity throughout the day so they can better listen and learn in class," Hubner-Levin said.

Fortunately, the Lamorinda area is replete with activities that bolster the proprioceptive system, which helps the body regulate itself. With our culture increasingly doing less hard labor, big muscle after-school activities offer children with SPD a stress-free way to use their bodies to help process sensory input from varying sources and thus improve self-regulation, strength, body-awareness and motor planning.

One sport that takes advantage of the area's outdoor beauty and gives children a chance to work on their non-verbal skills is horseback riding.

For the past 15 years Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center in Orinda has offered children with varying disabilities individual lessons suited to their unique

abilities. "A lot of our children don't have much control in their lives," said Xenophon executive director and founder Judy Lazarus. "When the kids are on a horse, they have some control of this large animal; they tell it when to go, when to stop. It makes them feel they are in control and gives them a sense of power that they may not get elsewhere."

"Horseback riding offers heavy proprioceptive input, enhancing balance, motor planning and students can bond with the horse," Hubner-Levin said. But Hubner-Levin especially values martial arts for kids with ADHD and autism. "It teaches them healthful respect and you only compete with yourself. It fosters respecting one another while enhancing focusing abilities and coordination."

But, she warns, it must be with the right teacher at the right level.

"You need to be sure the activity is not overly competitive and that the child is placed in an appropriate setting so the child doesn't feel frustrated, but rather can increase his self-confidence," she said.

Lamorinda Martial Arts in Orinda and the Karate & Fitness Place in Moraga both cater to students of a variety of ages and skill levels. For parents seeking a more therapeutic experience, they can enroll their children in programs like Quest Camp in Alamo, Kids in Motion Gymnastics on Piedmont Avenue in Oakland, or the year-round Special Skater Program at the Oakland Ice Center.

The bottom line, however, is that therapeutic after-school activities don't have to be expensive or complicated. "Take a nature walk, go to the park, go outside where you're breathing the fresh air," Hubner-Levin said. "Ride your scooter or bike, go to Lafayette Reservoir, play or climb the rock wall, throw a Frisbee on the grass, or simply walk your dog. Turn off the TV and video games - just for a little while - and get out there."

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