

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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Wednesday, December 26, 2007



Back left to right: Linda U. Foley, Sophie Braccini, Jean Follmer, Jennifer Wake, Cathy Tyson, Kevin D. Shallat, Tod Fierner
Front left to right: Alex Crook, Lee Borrowman, Andy Scheck, Wendy Scheck, Andrea A. Firth (not in the picture: Steve Angelides, Gavin Schlissel, David Anderson, Jordan Fong)

Dear Lamorinda Weekly Readers,

The Lamorinda Weekly Team, pictured above, want to wish you a Happy New Year. 2007 was our first year, a year of many unknowns and challenges. We asked our Editor twenty-three times: "Do we have a paper?" And she answered: "Yes, we do!" We like this rhythm and we're going to keep it!

We are very happy with the response we've received from the community and local businesses. We are also proud to be the paper that connects all of us who live in Lamorinda, as it connects our local businesses with local shoppers.

Since our first issue on March 14, we've delivered twenty-three issues full of information and stories about life in Lamorinda to all of you, and we've appreciated all of the story ideas and contributions you have sent to us.

2008 will be still a challenge for us on our way to becoming a well-established publication. We will celebrate our first anniversary in March; at some point we hope to become a true Weekly again.

The Lamorinda Weekly happens because of the great support of our editors, writers, re-

porters and photographers. Thank you, Team!

The last page of this issue is a special "Thank You" to all of our advertisers. Our paper that comes free to you is paid for by advertising.

The 2008 calendar insert is a complimentary gift to all of our readers. Thank you to Minuteman Press for printing it and sharing the cost with us. Extra copies can be picked up at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Office, the Orinda Chamber of Commerce Office and from our news stand at the Town of Moraga Offices, 329 Rheem Blvd, Moraga.

Andy & Wendy Scheck, Publishers

(Editors always get the last word: Friends and neighbors, your friendly neighborhood newspaper is indeed a team effort, but it would not be possible without Andy & Wendy Scheck, who conceived it, believe in it, work tirelessly for it 24/7, and give it everything they've got! -Ed.)

Advertising

Moraga: Council to Discuss Palos Spending

By Sophie Braccini

On January 9, 2008, the Moraga Town Council will hear a report by Town Manager Philip Vince, who will present the Town staff's recommendations for the use of \$17M in one-time developer fees from the Palos Colorado project.

The funds will be received by the Town over a period of six years and could be applied in many different ways; possibilities that have been discussed include infrastructure upgrades, recreational facilities or the creation of a "Palos Bank," which would allow the Town to self-finance. Vince will also recommend other methods of financing specific projects.

The Audit and Finance Committee, including Vince, Finance Director Emily Boyd, Town Treasurer Robert Kennedy, Council members Mike Metcalf and Rochelle Bird and residents Frank Comprelli and Wendy Buchman met on December 17th and amended the staff report. The end-result is expected to be fairly conservative.

The Town Council will review the different elements proposed by staff. It is likely to approve some and send others back for further review.

ABAG Low-Income Housing Allocations for Lamorinda

By Jean Follmer

On July 31, 2007, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) released their Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) for the period 2007-2014. ABAG determined a need of 214,500 additional housing units in the

Bay Area. Appeals may be filed until January 16, 2008 and final allocations will be assigned on July 31, 2008. According to ABAG, the Lamorinda allocations are as follows:

... story continued on page 2

In Numbers					
Income Group*	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Above Mod.	Total
Regional Totals	48,840	35,102	41,316	89,242	214,500
Lafayette	113	77	80	91	361
Moraga	73	47	52	62	234
Orinda	70	48	55	45	218

In Percentages					
Income Group*	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Above Mod.	Total
Regional Totals	23%	16%	19%	42%	100%
Lafayette	31%	22%	22%	25%	100%
Moraga	31%	20%	22%	27%	100%
Orinda	32%	22%	25%	21%	100%

*The Income Groups are determined as: Very Low - households with incomes up to 50% of the county's area median income (AMI), Low - households with incomes between 50 and 80% of the county's AMI, Moderate - households with incomes between 80 and 120% of the county's AMI and Above Moderate - households with incomes above 120% of the county's AMI.

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Orinda City Council Reviews Affordable Housing Projects

By David Anderson

The Orinda City Council and the Orinda Planning Commission are currently working out the details of two new affordable housing projects planned for Orinda. The December 18th City Council meeting had two separate items for affordable housing on the agenda. The first project, which is significantly farther along than the second, is a portion of Pulte Home's 14.1 acre Pine Grove development. The second development is an affordable housing facility for seniors to be located at 2 Irwin Way (the site of the former Orinda Library).

According to a City Council Staff Report the "Orinda General Plan Implementation Measure 3-2 states in part that the design policies and guidelines for the Pine Grove Neighborhood 'shall require 10 percent of the units to be affordable to low and moderate income households.'" In accordance with this guideline the Pine Grove development will include eight duplexes to be

sold at below market rates.

The Council decided Tuesday night that because the intent of the eight unit development is for families, the affordable housing units should be priced based on the median income of a four person household.

The Council also decided to support the Planning Commission's recommendation that the down payment for these homes be 10% of the sale price instead of 20%, due to the fact that low income families may have a difficult time making such a significant payment. With the standard household size to be four people for a three bedroom living space and the down payment likely to be 10%, the sales price of the homes, according to the city council staff report, will be just under \$375,000. The maximum income for eligibility of these homes will be \$100,600.

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Mailed to 23,000 homes and businesses in Lamorinda.



LAMORINDA WEEKLY this week									
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Lamorinda Community, Calendar, Agendas, Notes, News

Lafayette

Calendar	
City Council	7pm Community Center, Manzanita Room 500 St Mary's Road Monday, Jan 14
Planning Comm.	7pm Community Center, Manzanita Room 500 St Mary's Road Thursday, Jan 3
Design Review	7pm Community Center, Manzanita Room 500 St Mary's Road Tuesday, Jan 8
Park, Trails, Rec.	7pm Community Center 500 St Mary's Road Wednesday, Jan 9
Circulation	7pm Community Center, Manzanita Room 500 St Mary's Road Monday, Jan 7
Emergency Prep.	9:15am City Offices 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Suite 265 Wednesday, Jan 9
Senior Services	3:30pm Community Center, Alder Room 500 St Mary's Road

check online:
Town of Lafayette:
<http://www.ci.lafayette.ca.us>
• all meeting notes
• calendar updates
Chamber of Commerce:
<http://www.lafayettechamber.org>
• local businesses
• upcoming events



Check Theft, 12/11/07 A personal check was stolen from an elderly gentleman, at his place of employment, Better Homes Realty on Mt. Diablo Boulevard. Later it was cashed at the Orinda branch of Bank of the West. Thief was somewhat conservative, filling it out for \$120.

Stick-up, 12/10/07 A gunman entered Bank of the West in Lafayette, handed the teller a note and pointed a gun at her. The teller gave him \$3,336 from her drawer, after which the suspect fled the scene. An extensive search followed with unfortunately negative results. The FBI took possession of the surveillance tape.

He Said, She Said 12/07/07 Two Carol Lane residents have not been particularly friendly in the past. The male neighbor said he was almost hit by the SUV of his female neighbor. Female neighbor denies the accusation. There were no witnesses to verify either story.

Car Theft, 12/6/07 Keep an eye out for a 2001 white 4-door Volvo V60, as it was stolen from in front of its owner's home on Broadmoor Court. The car may have been unlocked with a spare key inside.

Lafayette Native Angelo Rossi Tells of Life in Reliez Valley
By Jean Follmer



Angelo & Gloria Rossi Photo Jean Follmer

Angelo Rossi was born in Lafayette in 1920 to Serafino and Mary Rossi. Both were from the Savona Province of Liguria, Italy. At 17, Serafino came to Lafayette to work in Upper Happy Valley. In 1907 the Serafino Rossis moved to Green Valley Road in the Reliez Valley. In 1918, they built a house further down Reliez Valley Road. The youngest of three brothers, Angelo grew up in Reliez Valley and resides there today. Angelo's first house had no running water or electricity. A windmill pumped water to a tank which was connected to a pipe that ran down the hill across the street and brought water to the house.

The Rossi family business was farming. Their crops included pears, peaches, tomatoes and grapes. Ed Rowland gave Serafino the initial seed and kept 50% of the profits. In time, Serafino bought 158 acres in Reliez Valley. Angelo said his father "took his produce to the 2nd & Franklin Market in Oakland by horse drawn carriage." There was no tunnel, so he would take Fish Ranch Road. It was a 5 hour trip and there was a trough on top of the hill where they'd stop to water the horses. The Rossi's eventually bought a truck and Angelo often accompanied his father to market.

Angelo said, "Lafayette pears were full of sugar." Trucks started coming to Lafayette to get them at the current site of Stanley Middle School. "The trucks would pick them up and bring them to the cannery in Gilroy," but they still had to take the peaches to market. They grew strawberry peaches, now called white peaches. Serafino taught the boys to pick the peaches at a certain firmness. They couldn't squeeze them because their fingerprints would show as brown spots. Angelo said "you can't get a good peach today unless it's from a tree. Now they pick them too green." The brothers walked to school at Lafayette Elementary. Brothers Frank and Serafino went to the old school (now the Lafayette United Methodist Church) and Angelo attended the new (current) school. Angelo was part of the first graduating class of 1941 at Acalanes High School. Prior

to that, he attended Diablo Valley High School.

Angelo met his wife, Gloria, at a wedding reception in Lafayette. He asked for her phone number and she obliged by writing it with a match stick on a match book. He put her number in his pocket, but it was lost because his mother washed the shirt the next day. He finally saw Gloria 1 1/2 years later at a Frank Sinatra show at Sweets Ballroom in Oakland. She was a senior in high school and he'd just received his draft notice for World War II. They courted for 15 days before he left for the War. As part of the 27th Infantry Division, he was sent to Schofield Barracks in Oahu. He received a Bronze Star for bravery and 2 Purple Hearts for wounds he sustained in Saipan and Okinawa.

Angelo and Gloria corresponded during his 3 1/2 year deployment and were married upon his return. Gloria says "It was meant to be" and they've been married for 62 years. They have a son, Jim, and 2 grandchildren and have lived in the same house 56 years. During his deployment, Angelo's mother was very upset and she refused to make her famous Italian raviolis. Upon his return, she made the raviolis and Angelo wonders if his brothers were happier to see him or to eat the raviolis again!

After his marriage, Angelo worked for his father-in-law in the produce business in San Leandro. Serafino eventually stopped farming and opened Rossi Brothers Furniture Store in Lafayette for his sons. For almost 30 years, they built and refinished furniture. In the 1950s, Serafino gradually started selling the family land to developers. The Rossi home on Reliez Valley Road and a subsequent one on Hilltop are still occupied, though no longer by the Rossi family. Nearby, you'll find Angelo and Rossi streets.

ABAG Low-Income Housing Allocations for Lamorinda

... continued from page 1
there is "no requirement the units be in a certain place." At this point, Lafayette is unsure where the additional units would be located. Lafayette mailed three letters to the ABAG Board citing concerns about their allocation and has yet to receive a response. Some of the concerns include topography, congestion and economic impacts. Lafayette's letter dated November 15, 2006 states "The steep topography to the north of the BART station restricts the City's ability to permit higher densities north of the freeway and the transit station." On congestion, it says "Our key arterials (already) serve as thoroughfares for the traffic from other jurisdictions to access the freeway." It goes on to say, "If Lafayette is required to accommodate more growth than that envisioned in the City's General Plan, there will be gridlock in the downtown and intersections operating

at failed levels of service." At the Lafayette City Council meeting on December 12, 2007, there was discussion of a possible appeal to ABAG. However, Ms. Srivatsa indicated that numbers removed from Lafayette will be assigned to another jurisdiction in Contra Costa County. Further, she said that there needs to be a "technical reason" to appeal and staff does not believe there is a technical reason that would cause ABAG to change its opinion. After some back and forth between Mayor Mike Anderson, Vice Mayor Donald Tatzin, Council Member Brandt Anderson and Council Member Carl Anduri, they asked staff to discover if other jurisdictions were planning to appeal and how much an appeal may cost. The subject was continued to the next City Council meeting on January 14, 2008, two days prior to the ABAG appeal deadline.

Lafayette Police Staffing Update

By Cathy Tyson
On November 7th of 2006, voters failed to pass the Lafayette Police Services Act, Measure P, a local tax to increase funding for police. It would have levied an annual parcel tax of \$64 per parcel on all single-family residential properties in Lafayette for five years. Larger apartment complexes and business parcels would have paid significantly more. Although 60.6% voted yes, it needed 66%, a 2/3 majority to pass. More than a year later, the most obvious fallout is the limited police presence around town. At times there are only two officers patrolling Lafayette, one north of Mt. Diablo Boulevard, and one south of Mt. Diablo Boulevard. Back in October, the department received over 1,000 calls for service during the month for everything from false alarms, to traffic issues to noise complaints. All those calls require some kind of follow-up; lean staffing means longer response times and prioritizing calls.

"We want to address citizens concerns. Please call us about things you're concerned about, like suspicious people or vehicles," said Chief Mike Hubbard. He added that residents can help the department by being vigilant, the eyes and ears of the community. In referring to patrol officers, he noted that, "The more cars you stop, the more bad guys you find." Lafayette has the smallest police force per resident of any city in the County. While most communities have 2 officers/1,000 residents, Lafayette

and Orinda have .06 officers per 1,000 residents. By comparison, nearby Brentwood has 2.5 officers/1,000 residents. Currently the department is staffed with 15 Sworn Offi-

cers, 5 Reserve Officers, 1 police dog, "Doc", and 4 Non-Sworn Officers. They are all working hard, but stretched thin due to the current budget.

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Lamorinda Community, Calendar, Agendas, Notes, News

Moraga

Calendar	
City Council	7:30pm
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School 1010 Camino Pablo Wednesday, Jan 9	
Saturday, Jan 12	
Planning Comm.	7:30pm
Hacienda, La Sala Room 2100 Donald Drive Monday, Jan 7	
Design Review	7:30pm
Hacienda, La Sala Room 2100 Donald Drive Monday, Jan 14	
Park & Rec	7:30pm
Hacienda, Mosaic Room 2100 Donald Drive Tuesday, Jan 15	
Liaison	8:00am
Fire Station 1280 Moraga Way Friday, Jan 11	
Chamber of Commerce	8am
Terzetto's Cuisine Moraga Shopping Center Friday, Jan 25	
check online: Town of Moraga: http://www.ci.moraga.ca.us for: • all meeting notes • calendar updates	

Town Council Transition With a Few Hiccups

By Sophie Braccini



New Mayor Lynda Deschambault with Vice-Mayor Dave Trotter Photo Sophie Braccini

Passage of the baton is usually a smooth operation at the top of the Town's hierarchy. On December 12th, the Moraga Town Council felt a few jolts in the transmission, but the end result was what everyone expected, as Michael Metcalf handed over the Mayor's seat to Lynda Deschambault.

During the public comment session, two citizens voiced their concern about the process itself: "There should be more than one nomination," said Barbara Simpson after Dave Trotter nominated Deschambault as the next mayor and no other person was proposed. Another citizen was even more forceful: "... it seems it was all already decided behind closed doors."

Town Manager Philip Vince explained that traditionally the number of votes obtained by

each council member during the election determines the order in which they become Mayor and Vice-Mayor. In the last election, Metcalf received the largest number of votes and became Mayor, followed by Deschambault who was named Vice-Mayor. By that method, the next Vice-Mayor would be Dave Trotter, followed by Ken Chew. "What is the point of nominating and electing people if there is an existing rule to select them?" Metcalf asked. The Council decided to postpone discussing the legality of a process that has been in place for some 20 years until a future meeting.

Deschambault was elected with three votes, from herself, Trotter and Chew; Metcalf and Rochelle Bird abstained. Chew nominated Trotter to become the next Vice-Mayor and Metcalf

nominated Bird. Trotter was elected Vice-Mayor with three votes.

After the election, Metcalf delivered a very thoughtful message, reflecting on his tenure as Mayor. His first point was that Moraga needs to realize how much it is part of a community of towns: "We are not as much as a cul-de-sac as we think," said he, "we depend on everyone else, we need to think about ourselves as part of a bigger community."

Metcalf warmly thanked the Town staff for their work. "Staff does the job, they're the ones who get the laundry out." He asked that staff be honored and respected.

Metcalf's address was followed by public acknowledgment of his leadership, open-mindedness and flexibility. "You're an engineer who showed heart," concluded former Mayor Michael Majchrzak.

It was then Deschambault's turn to give her first address. She, too, thanked staff for their hard work and support. She addressed the public to urge committees and volunteers to continue their participation in the town's affairs: "Your contribution is key to maintaining transparency in the management of public affairs," she said. To give a first flavor of what her objectives were going to be for her tenure, she reminded the audience of her campaign motto: Thoughtful progress, to protect our past and plan for our future.

Town of Moraga Seeks Volunteers

By Lee Borrowman

The Moraga Planning Commission, Design Review Board and the Park and Recreation Commission are among the Town entities currently accepting applications from Moraga residents who are interested in serving the community on a voluntary basis as a Commissioner.

The Park and Recreation Commission makes recommendations to the Town Council regarding parks and recreation facilities, and advises other Town bodies concerning planned developments as they relate to park, recreation and open space concerns. The incoming Commission will be working to implement a new Master Plan for Moraga Parks and Recreation. Parks and Rec Director Jay Ingram hopes that the composition of the Commission will reflect the different interests in Moraga. A balanced Commission would include folks who can speak on behalf of seniors, families with both young and teenage children, and youth sports enthusiasts. Applications for these posi-

tions are available on the Town website, and are due on January 11, 2008. Questions may be directed to Ingram, jingram@moraga.ca.us or 888-7034.

The Town is encouraging individuals with expertise and/or education in architecture, civil engineering, landscape architecture construction or graphic design to apply for volunteer positions on the Design Review Board. The DRB meets the 2nd and 4th Mondays of every month.

The Planning Commission advises the Town Council on physical projects in the Town, and hears and determines applications for planned development, conditional use permits, zone changes and subdivision. The four Planning Commissioners whose terms are expiring may seek reappointment.

Applications for the DRB and Planning Commission are available on the Town website and are due on Wednesday, January 9, 2008. Questions can be directed to the Planning Department, 888-7070,

or planning@moraga.ca.us.

Visit the Town website for more information, applications, or to view other volunteer opportunities, such as the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee and the Town Beautification and Tree Planting Program Committee, http://moraga.ca.us/production/moraga_employment_volunteer.php?mn=7.



D.U.I., 12/09/07 At just after 2:00 in the morning, a blue Nissan pickup truck was stopped on Rheem Boulevard for expired registration tags. The 23-year old male driver showed signs of intoxication, his blood alcohol level was measured twice and came in at .15% and .14%.

Driving with a Suspended License, 12/08/07 A 2002 Ford Mustang was stopped on Coral Drive near Moraga Way for speeding, going approximately 54 m.p.h. in a 35 m.p.h. zone. The 19-year old driver was on active misdemeanor probation through March of 2009 as well as driving on a suspended Driver's License for a 2006 D.U.I. Driver was cited and released at the scene. How about a shiny new bus pass for Christmas?

D.U.I., 12/07/07 A Nissan Sentra was stopped on Moraga Way near Hardie Drive because driver was veering from side to side and going significantly under the speed limit. The 32-year-old driver was taken to the Police Department where he gave a blood test and ultimately released on a misdemeanor citation.

Disposition of Evidence
Moraga Police Department no longer needs property related to case 05-999 for evidentiary purposes. All evidence is going to be disposed of. If you are involved in the case and have ownership of items involved please contact the Moraga Police Department Property Officer Heather Pomeroy at (925)376-2515. All Evidence will be destroyed after January 15, 2008.



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Lamorinda Community, Calendar, Agendas, Notes, News

Orinda

Calendar	
City Council	7pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library 26 Orinda Way TBT	
Planning Comm.	7pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library 26 Orinda Way Thursday, Jan 10	
Hist. Landmark Comm.	3pm
Gallery Room, Upper Level 26 Orinda Way Tuesday, Jan 22 (no Dec meeting)	
Liaison	8:30am
Community Room at City Hall 22 Orinda Way Monday, Jan 7	

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Chamber of Commerce:
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You Can Run, 12/06/07 ...but you can't hide from the long arm of the law. A white male 41-year old resident of San Francisco was pulled over going west bound on Highway 24. He was identified via computer as the driver in a non-injury collision. The officer advised him not to continue driving because of his lack of a driver's license, registration and insurance. The naughty driver would have none of this and in the officer's presence fled the scene and refuse to yield to the lights and siren of the police car. Criminal charges will be pursued.

Downspouts Disappear, 12/1/07 An infamous Miner Road resident had 12 copper downspouts removed from the exterior of her residence. The victim no longer lives there. The downspouts were simply cut away from the gutters surrounding the home. Estimated damage of \$20,000.

Burglary, 12/07/07 Someone entered a Stanton Court home via an unlocked door and took electronic equipment and a pair of running shoes. No suspects or leads at this time, but this reporter doesn't believe it was the work of Santa.

12/02/07 The daughter of a Bobolinks Drive resident is missing her Apple iPhone. The young lady attended a party on Normandy Lane, with approximately 50 other students in attendance. The phone fell out of her pocket sometime between 9:00 and 11:00 p.m. The family requested a police report for insurance purposes to replace the phone.

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<http://www.lamorindaweekly.com>
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Orinda Historical Society Honors Members

By Andrea A. Firth



(Left to right) Award winners John Holmgren, Helen Vurek, and Charles Blue with Orinda Historical Society President Lucy Hupp Williams Photo Kent Long

Over one hundred individuals attended the Orinda Historical Society's holiday dinner where residents Charles Blue, John Holmgren, and Helen Vurek were honored for their contributions to the history of Orinda. Blue, Holmgren, and Vurek were the first recipients of the Orinda Historical Society Award which recognized their ongoing support of the Society and its goals. "All of these people have been a great help to me personally," noted His-

torical Society President Lucy Hupp Williams, "and I know their presence and mentorship has been of great help to other members of the Board."

Charles Blue was a charter member of the Orinda Historical Society and worked to establish the organization over 38 years ago. He is a past President and current board member. "Charles has been a tremendous mentor to me," said Williams, "and he continues to be someone I can call

with questions." Blue also served Orinda as a volunteer fireman and Chairman of the Fire District for over 20 years.

"John Holmgren has extensive knowledge of the history and geography of California," noted Williams. As the longtime editor of the California State Automobile Association's monthly magazine Motorland (now Via) and host of a daily travel show on CBS radio, John spent his career helping Californians experience the state's rich history and extraordinary travel opportunities. Holmgren moved to Orinda in 1950 and quickly got involved with the Historical Society. "He's done a lot to educate Orindans," noted Williams. "He has led tours to historic sites. He has given travel talks. And, he's always willing to stuff envelopes," she added with a laugh.

An Orinda resident since 1939, Helen Vurek has made her own mark on Orinda's history. Now 97 years old, Vurek has been dubbed "the pioneer" within Historical Society circles. She has been a tireless volunteer for the Historical Society and several

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other organizations and helped to advance the evolution of Orinda as a community. She worked to establish the Orinda Dramateurs, the Democratic Club, and helped to found a childcare program at the Orinda Park Pool. "She always has helped with Historical Society events," said Williams. "She has just always volunteered. She just knew there was a need."

"All three of these individuals are willing to roll up their sleeves

and do the work that needs to be done," explained Williams. "They have all helped to fold and stuff newsletters, identify and sort photos and papers, and much more." The award winners were feted in the Fellowship Hall at the Orinda Community Church with a catered meal. Local artist and longtime Orinda resident John Cleary entertained the guests with a presentation about his work in sculpture.

The Spirit of the Holidays Alive at Royal Ground

By David Anderson

Fun. Friends. Care. Love. These are all words that we hope will resonate throughout the community this holiday season. They are also the words Annie Janes, owner of Royal Ground in Orinda, uses to describe the tree customers put up in her coffee shop. This tree is very unique and not like any other Christmas tree you may see during this Holiday season.

In fact, it is best described as a "Holiday tree, not just a Christmas tree", as there is something special in its message. Annie adds, it's "more than just a Christ-

mas tree" because it represents the entire community, not just those who celebrate Christmas.

Everything on the tree (including the tree itself) has been donated by customers who frequent the coffee shop. The tree is decorated with a variety of ornaments that people in the community have either made or brought from home. These include carvings of bears and horses, a wooden cutout of Charlie Brown, Christmas lights and clusters of little bells. Nearly anything and everything is accepted as an ornament. There is even a coffee cup

lid and a few decorations made from old coffee cups. People of various faiths have also added to the tree in the spirit of community and the holidays. One such example is the six pointed Star of David that sits at the top of the tree.

According to Annie, the tree has helped bring people together. "Everyone is so busy [during the holidays] but they bring something [to put on the tree]" she says, adding that the customers who pitched in are "all from many different religions and many different countries with different beliefs. I'm very

touched by all this." With the chaos of the season, it is refreshing to know there is a place in the community where people are willing to take a moment to stop, rest and come together in the spirit of the season.



Ornaments hanging on the Royal Ground's Christmastree



Photo David Anderson

Orinda City Council Reviews Affordable Housing Projects ... continued from page 1

Councilmember Amy Worth suggested that eligibility for the homes should not be based on income alone, adding that an "asset test" should be put in place to decide eligibility. She offered the example that those applicants with "lower paying jobs and a trust fund" should not be considered eligible.

The major discussion topic on this issue dealt with who gets preference to live in the homes. Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu stated to the Council that they cannot (for legal reasons) give preference "to someone who's worked or lived in Orinda a longer period." The City Council, however, did agree that preference should be given to those who live or work in Orinda and have salaries that qualify. Preference for the housing will likely be given to teachers, police, fire and municipal employees.

An affordable housing facility for seniors at the site of the former Orinda Library was also discussed Tuesday night. The first of seven steps to select a developer for the project is now under way. The City Council took the first step December 18th by reviewing a draft of the Request for Qualifications (RFQ), which is a document for developers to display their qualifications during the application process. If the timeframe for each step adheres to schedule the Council will be choosing a developer in early May, 2008.

The Council decided Tuesday night to form a selection committee made up of two Council members, the Planning Director and two members of the community (one with expertise in affordable housing). The committee will be selected by Mayor Smith.

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New Years Resolutions in LAMORINDA

I Resolve...

We couldn't resist! We just had to ask some familiar Lamorindans, "What's your New Year's Resolution? And will you share it with all of Lamorinda?" We said, "Anything goes! Be serious, or be silly!" Perhaps not surprisingly, some familiar themes emerged.

They speak for themselves, so without further ado, "I hereby resolve..."

"...to consume less and recycle more." - **Mike Anderson, Mayor of Lafayette**

"...to just keep my head above water." - **Erling Horn, former Mayor of Lafayette**

"...to make sure that I somehow still find time to take long walks my two beautiful Siberian Huskies."

- **Lynda Deschambault, Mayor of Moraga**

"...(on behalf of the City Council), to make 2008 a safe and productive year for Orinda!"

- **Victoria Smith, Mayor of Orinda**

"...to buy a bike and actually use it in the Spring and Summer to pedal to work. I'm running out of excuses."

- **Philip Vince, Moraga Town Manager (we've assured Mr. Vince that our cameras will be looking for him)**

"...my Daddy told me never to make a promise I couldn't keep, so I never make New Year's resolutions."

- **Mike Hubbard, Police Chief, Lafayette**

"...to return phone calls from the Lamorinda Weekly more promptly, and to get a new Prius patrol car."

- **Bill French, Police Chief, Orinda (we will monitor the Chief's progress and report back)**

"...to continue working with the community in traffic safety and to balance more time with my family and work."

- **Mark Ruppenthal, Police Chief, Moraga**

"...to ask my friends and relatives to please make a donation in my name to groups that offset carbon footprint rather than giving me 'stuff' for my birthday and the Holydays."

- **Steve Woolpert, Dean of Liberal Arts, Saint Mary's College**

"...to create more personal time for myself in order to do the things that I want and need to do."

- **Jim Negri, Superintendent, Acalanes Union High School District**

"... as a superintendent, to encourage the governor and legislature to provide equitable funding to school districts that are experiencing declining enrollment. On a lighter note, my personal resolution is to play some tennis this coming year."

- **Frank S. Tom, Superintendent, Lafayette School District**

Collected by the Team, compiled by Lee Borrowman

"...on a personal level, to budget my time with family and dissertation. Professionally, to continue to build a stronger community."

- **Raul Zamora, Principal, Miramonte High School**

"...to keep expanding the minds of children with mathematical knowledge, inspiring their spirits with mathematical wonderment and touching their hearts with mathematical kindness. Also I'm kind of a porker, so some weight loss would be great too."

- **Mike Plant, Math Dept. Chair, Miramonte High School**

"...both past and present: a) lose weight (not transfer weight from left thigh to right thigh); b) grow some hair (new year's dream); c) play the lottery until I win; d) after the previous 3 resolutions failed my new New Year's resolution is to never make another New Year's resolution again!"

- **Tom Schumann, Math Teacher, Campolindo**

"...to be more present to people, to situations, to life and never miss an opportunity to say that I care."

- **Sophie Braccini, Ace Reporter, Lamorinda Weekly**

"...to procrastinate less, eat more fruit and vegetables, less Chardonnay and potato chips, and finally to proofread more carefully."

- **Cathy Tyson, Ace Reporter, Lamorinda Weekly**

"...to be more patient at home, less sarcastic at work and to trust Tyson's proofreading skills."

- **Ed**

"...to try to get my family to become "carbon-neutral." Last year's resolution was to reduce our footprint by 50%; in 2008 we'll have to work on transportation."

- **Steve Richards, Sustainable Lafayette**

"...(or rather) I wish for communal wisdom that will instill in us humans the desire to settle our conflicts and differences through all possible peaceful means other than violence. It's absolutely heartbreaking to know that in all corners of the world there are groups of people committing atrocities upon other groups. It is such a horrendous waste of human energy and resources, that also destroys the surrounding environment. What wondrously beautiful things we could instead accomplish if we could somehow harness this cumulative tendency toward violence, transforming it into a positive force to save our civilization and our planet through cooperation."

- **Kay James, Lamorinda Peace and Justice Group**

"...to be a better person, which means more awake, more conscious of my surroundings, the needs of other people and less into self interests and narrow ways of thinking. There is a message of Love out there. I'd like to continue to help promote it."

- **Paul Fillingier, President, Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary**

"...in 2008 I will drive my bike in the Bay Area at least once a week."

- **Edy Schwartz, President of the Chamber of Commerce of Moraga**

"...to save enough money to be able to go back to Ireland with my wife for our 25th anniversary."

- **Jay Lifson, Executive Director, Lafayette Chamber of Commerce**

"...to work less and spend more time with my family."

- **Bill Snider, Owner, Moraga Hardware**

"...to work harder, work smarter and make a lot of money!"

- **A.J. Nisen, Mortgage Loan Consultant, Bank of America Mortgages**

"...to ride a 'double century' (200 mile bike ride) and grow hair on my head!"

- **Tom Park, Executive Vice-President, California Bank of Commerce (yup, we'll be watching for the hair)**

"...(it's the same every year), to have fun in the coming year. It will be hard to top 2007 in 2008!"

- **Stacy Spell - General Manager, Oakwood Athletic Club**

"...to find a rewarding, challenging and fun new job in 2008."

- **Glen Zamanian, Vice-President, Experience Unlimited**

"...to lose weight."

- **Chef Dan Leff, Caterer**

"...to have a day off in 2008 that's not on a holiday."

- **Jorge Quintero, Owner, Pet Shoppe in Lafayette and Moraga (if you figure out how to do that, please let us know)**



Stacy Spell



Philip Vince



Jay Lifson



Mark Ruppenthal



Victoria Smith

Make a Phone Call

By Nicolle

The last time I spoke to my sister was on Christmas, 2006. I never knew it would be a last conversation, as we never know a last will be a last. She was 37 years old. My husband told me of her drowning on June 9 of this year. She had drowned that morning. I have never been more grateful for an hour long conversation

phone caall...call my mmmoooom!!!!"

I don't really remember how she managed to remedy the situation with that little guy, he was one of the many that she



worked with and helped through their tough transitions. I do know that we would joke often when there were

goodbye, and we need those in life. 2007 has been an exercise in making these calls...it's harder without her reminders, but I try. Julie gave this gift to me and I will always treasure it. Now I would like to offer it to you.

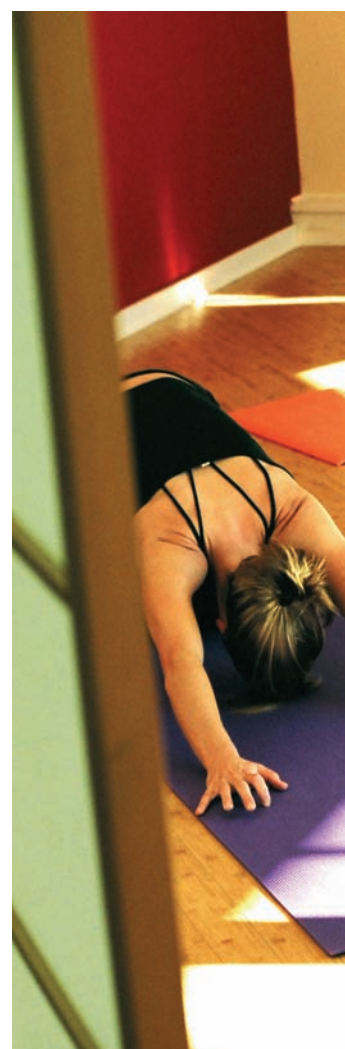
As I sat on a porch in a rocking chair during a light snowfall on Christmas night in Connecticut, I said my last goodbye, Merry Christmas and I love you to my sister. Is there anyone out there who you need to call? Make a phone call, it might be your 'last.'

between sisters on a Blessed Christmas evening in my life.

Julie was a school psychologist and loved to share stories about the children she worked with. One little child she adored was a 5 year old boy who missed his mother so much he would try just about anything to have an opportunity to speak to her. He would drop large objects on his feet...such as tables or free weights. He would climb as high as possible in the classroom, curling into a little ball on top of the teachers coat closet. He'd tantrum, sending a first year teacher into tears with him. My sister would coax him to her office, then he'd stare into my sister's eyes, clutch the phone, and yell "make a phone call...make a

times when we didn't want to make a phone call or felt like we had the time and we would bother one another endlessly. I'd plop down my groceries, children and barking dogs everywhere, play the recorder and hear; "Hi, it's Jules, I know that you have a lot going on right now but so and so didn't sound well and...(muted laughter) make a phone call...make a phone call!!!" beep. I returned the favor often enough.

I never thought the phone calls we were reminding one another to make could have been the 'last'. A last laugh, a last chance to hear that person's voice, maybe an insight never shared, or just an ordinary conversation. At the end of the call, there is always one thing- a last



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THEATER & MUSIC

Last weekend to see Lafayette Town Hall Theatre Company's Miracle on 34th Street.

Contact the Town Hall Theatre Company Box Office for exact dates and times Town Hall Theatre Company, 3535 School Street at Moraga Road, Lafayette 925-283-1557 or www.thtc.org

Lafayette Town Hall Theatre presents "Moonlight and Magnolias" February 9 - March 15, 2008.

This story brings audiences into the inside of the office of legendary producer David O. Selznick during the final moments when he is transforming the best selling book, "Gone with the Wind," into one of the most beloved movies of all time. Contact the Town Hall Theatre Company Box Office for exact dates and times Town Hall Theatre Company, 3535 School Street at Moraga Road, Lafayette 925-283-1557 or www.thtc.org

ART

Moraga Art Gallery "Texture and Light" through January 6th.

Featuring the work of Pat Smith, who likes to experiment with different art forms: watercolor, acrylic painting, printmaking, photography and fiber arts. Moraga Art Gallery, 570 Center St, Rheem Valley Shopping Center/next to Longs Drugs Open Tuesday through Sunday, 12-5 pm. 925.376.5407

During the Chinese New Year celebrations, Bedford gallery

will be inhabited by a group of larger-than-life ceramic figures by Chinese artist Wanxin Zhang. Inspired by the 8,000 clay figures discovered in the tomb of China's first emperor, Zhang's warriors forge a remarkable visual passage from past to present. Opening

Reception—Sun, Jan 13, 3-5 pm. Please join us for a special event featuring Chinese musicians and dancing dragons. Refreshments hosted by the Bedford Gallery Guild. Admission \$3. Free for Friends of the Bedford and members of DRAA.

"Mt. Diablo A Personal View"—The Photography of Sue Reynolds. Through February 28. Lindsay Wildlife Museum, 1931 First Ave, Walnut Creek

LITERATURE

World Affairs Book Group will discuss "Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy" by Fawaz A. Gerges on Tuesday, January 15, 2008 at 3:00 p.m. at Orinda Books. The purpose of the World Affairs Book Group is to enlarge our understanding of important issues through reading and discussion. New members are always welcome. There are no membership requirements or obligations. For information, call Daisy Daymond, Group Leader, at 935-1565.

Orinda Library presents El Cerrito writer, Shelly Ravioli, whose book, "Travels with Baby: The Ultimate Guide for Planning Trips with Babies, Toddlers, and Preschool-Age Children," on Wed., Jan. 9 from 10:30 -11:30 am. There will be a Preschool Storytime in the library during the program for little ones. Free. Orinda Library Gallery Room at 26 Orinda Way in Orinda.

The Friends of the Moraga Library present a visit with Carol Pogash, author of *Seduced by Madness: the true story of the Susan Polk Murder Case.* Tue, Jan 15, 7pm Moraga Library

Teens Speak Out About What It Means to be an American (On-

going Event) Wednesday, January 02, 2008 - Thursday, January 31, 2008 Lafayette Library - Acalanes High School Essay Display "Is the American Dream Still Alive?"

OTHER EVENTS

Teens Knit Mon, January 14 at 4pm at the Lafayette Library. Find a new and productive way to relax after school. Impress friends and family with your mad skills. Take a more active role in the flowering evolution of your wardrobe... Learn to knit for teens: Middle School and High School

Lafayette Parks and Recreation winter session registration has begun. Go online to www.LafayetteRec.org or call us at 925-284-2232.

Stretch, tone and reduce stress with Yoga for All Ages, learn to play real songs from the Beatles, Santana and Green Day in just a few weeks at Beginning Guitar. Learn to knit, dance and many other things through Moraga Parks and Recreation winter/spring classes. Registration has begun: www.moraga.ca.us

Men's Basketball Open Gym starting Sat, Jan 19th from 7-9pm at Joaquin Moraga School in Moraga. \$5 per player/night. For more information contact Gerald De Venuta at 817-8429 or the Moraga Parks and Recreation Dept at 925-888-7045.

Moraga Garden Club's annual salad luncheon. - January 17, 9:30 a.m., Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School St., Kristin Yanker-Hansen, Horticulturist/Floral Designer will speak and create Gorgeous Winter Blooms. For information contact Mardi Potts at (925) 376-2004.

Montelindo Garden Club will host a special winter speaker series starting on Fri, Jan 18th with Dick Turner, Editor of Pacific Horticultural Magazine. The events will be held at the Orinda Community Church, #10 Irwin Way, Orinda at 10:00AM. They are free to the public. Refreshments will be served, followed by the speaker.

The Moraga Movers' first monthly luncheon of the new year will be held on January 14. The guest speaker is Carol Ryan, Business Development Director for Holland America Cruise Line. She will share some of Holland's offerings in a DVD presentation, and discuss the two sailings that will be offered to interested members - the Sea of Cortez and Canada/New England cruises. Lunch reservations must be made by Jan 9. Sign up on the bulletin board in La Sala at the Hacienda.

FREE e-waste recycling event at Diablo Valley College, in Pleasant Hill, on Fri, Jan 4th from 12 - 5pm and Sat and Sun, Jan 5th and 6th, from 9am - 3pm. The event is open to any California resident, business, school, etc. Drop off is FREE and items accepted include tv's, monitors, computers, and more - with no limit! Visit www.noewaste.com or call toll free, (866) 335-3373 for electronic items accepted and detailed event info. Sponsored by Electronic Waste Management, a state-approved e-waste collector.

Please submit events to:
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RITES vs. Rights: Women of Islam

Submitted by Gloria Weston

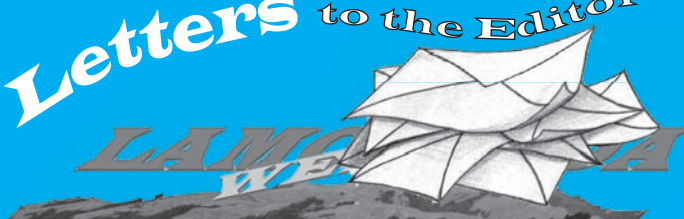
On Tuesday, January 8, the Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette Branch of the American Association of University Women will present RITES vs. RIGHTS, Women of Islam, an informative panel discussion on a very timely subject: Equality and Suppression in the Muslim World. The meeting will begin at 9:30 am at the Holy Trinity Serbian Church Cultural Center, 1700 School Street, Moraga.

Members of the panel will include Guity Kiani, originally from Iran and currently a retired founder, executive director and counselor for the Center for New Americans; Wafaa Aborashed, who has

been involved with the United Nations and Women's Interfaith groups since immigrating from Jordan; Dr. William Davis, J.D., who has done extensive studies on gender bias, and has provided technical, management and advisory services to help developing and transitioning societies navigate the challenges they face. Branch member Jaleh Kilpatrick will facilitate the panel discussion and an audience question-and-answer time following the presentation.

For more information on this meeting and on the Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette Branch of AAUW, please visit their website: www.aauwoml.org.

Letters to the Editor



Share your thoughts with our community! Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writers and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and town (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only), and should be 350 words or less. Letters may be edited for length or legal considerations.

email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com;
Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Dear Editor:
The good works of fine young men need to be heralded — and you are doing that! Thank you for your excellent coverage of the Lt. Michael Gerson's activity with Iraqi Boy Scouts and on Nick Piatt's outstanding Eagle Service Project. Lt. Gerson is applying what he learned as a boy scout doing his Eagle Service Project and is investing his time in a project that he hopes will help build in Iraqi youth a sense of national unity. Whether he will achieve that or

not is not as important as the effort. As Lt. Gerson knows, whether or not any good comes of our good efforts, we may never know. But what we do know is that if no good is done, no good will happen. Nick took on a huge project, but that did not phase him because he was focused on the benefit the project would do for the kids at JM. Good "kids" doing good things — we need to hear about them. Thank you. Thomas J. McIntosh, Moraga

Lamorinda Weekly is an independent publication, produced by and for the residents of Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda, CA

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Campus Happenings




Photo by Ken C. Young, Moraga; www.kcyoungfineartimages.com

Lectures/Special Events/Performances:
"Focus the Nation: Global

Warming Solutions for America"
The event, which includes a day-long Eco-Fair and evening symposium, is part of a national teach-in on climate change called Focus the Nation that will involve more than 1,000 colleges, schools, civic groups and faith organizations during the last week of January. The symposium culminates the Saint Mary's College Focus the Nation event with experts discussing the challenges and opportunities presented by climate change and what it will take to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 2 percent over the next decade.

Wednesday, Jan. 23 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Eco-Fair); 7 p.m. (Symposium); Soda Center Free
For info, visit: <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/news-and-events/focus-the-nation/index.html>
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Art Exhibitions:
"Pinturas de Fe: The Retablo Tradition in Mexico and New Mexico"
Pilgrimage, procession, and the creation of home altars and shrines are ancient religious practices that endure today in many cultures around the world. This exhibition tells the story of one such tradition as it evolved in the Americas from the time of the Spanish Conquest to the present day. Today, individual artists faithfully carry on the tradition of hand painted retablos, and contemporary artists from diverse cultural backgrounds draw creative inspiration from this popular art form. Exhibition opens Jan. 12 and runs through April 6
Hearst Art Gallery
"William Keith: The 1880s Paintings"
Works from the 1880s, which marked a decade of great changes in William Keith's life. On view in the William Keith Room
Hearst Art Gallery

Exhibition hours: Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.
Admission: \$3 adult; children 12 and under free; free parking
Web site: <http://gallery.stmarys-ca.edu>.
Telephone: 925-631-4379

For more information about upcoming events at Saint Mary's College, visit the college website at <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/news-and-events/events.html>.

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• **Life in LAMORINDA**
Pet-related Businesses Spring Forth in Lamorinda

By Jennifer Wake

Most people like animals, but very few would go to the extreme of opening a business to cater to them. That number, however, is growing rapidly.

With a glut of cash flowing into the pet products industry, and new businesses popping up faster than Jack Russell Terriers, Lamorinda business owners who cater to critters find success comes from building relationships and being passionate about people's pets.

Like many pet-focused business owners, Len and Leslie Ofiana got into the business seven years ago because they loved animals. With three dogs of their own, (two of which were Greyhound rescues) and having worked retail during college, Len and Leslie decided to leave the corporate grind to open Nitro Dog in Lafayette – a unique boutique which caters to dogs and their owners.

Len likens the shop to running a neighborhood bar: "We know the names of the people who come in, we know their pets and their families," he said. "Our shop was once mentioned as one of the best pick up joints in Lamorinda,"

he added with a smile.

"We have wonderful customers who know us and know we'll do research on our products," Leslie said. "We're well priced and we'll tell our customers not to buy things if we've found they're not high quality or are not good for their pet. They trust us."

For the past seven years, Lafayette resident Amanda Harvey has been coming to Nitro Dog for her pet supplies. "They have a beautiful selection of stuff and the owners are awesome," she said. "They know my whole family."

In addition to featuring local artists' wares, such as hand-knitted chew toys, dog-shaped cutouts and animal paintings, the Ofianas support organizations like Paws for a Cause, Golden State Greyhound Adoption, and have the Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) mobile unit at their shop each month.

When Nitro Dog first opened, it was one of the only shops like it in the area, but Leslie says that is no longer the case. "Back then it was a niche, but now it's inundated," she said from behind the counter of her shop in La Fiesta Square. "Dog shops open (and



Heather Juracich's love of her 10 pets gave her the idea to start her own pet walking and sitting business

Photo Heather Juracich

close) every year."

There is a reason for the shift to this line of business: there is money to be made. According to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association, people spent more than \$40 billion on pets last year.

Lafayette resident and founder of Discovery Toys, Lane Nemeth, started PetLane in 2002 – a direct sales company that features pet products. Her products are now sold in 30 states through a network of 750 pet advisers.

And pet owners are paying for more than just products. One Walnut Creek-based com-

pany offers pet waste removal for East Bay residents. The Aussie Pet Mobile can be seen on Lamorinda streets providing mobile grooming for pets.

Heather Juracich of Lafayette was surprised she could actually make a living with her dog walking and pet sitting business. In 2002, when Heather worked for Lucasfilm Animation, she was having trouble finding a dog walker for her own dog. After doing some research, she left her job and founded Heather's Pet Care, Inc. After a year, Heather said that it got so busy her husband Josh Gum quit his job as a

graphic designer to help out. "I walk the smaller dogs, and Josh takes the labs and the shepherds."

Now their 4-month-old daughter, Violet, has joined the family business, riding in the jogging stroller while Heather runs along with up to six dogs in tow at Lafayette Reservoir, Briones and other East Bay Regional Parks where they have a permit. Josh will take the larger dogs to Mulholland Ridge in Moraga, and the couple even takes dogs on 3-hour excursions to the water at Point Isabel or Paso Nogal. Inclement weather doesn't hold

them back.

"If there's a light rain, we still go on walks," Heather said. "We just wear mud boots and rain coats."

In the past year Heather has seen a lot of new pet walking businesses starting up, but she says it doesn't matter.

"This is something I love," she said. "And the client comes home to a calm and tired dog who is happy."

The bottom line for animal-focused entrepreneurs is that they love what they do and can make a living doing it.

Check Out Teen Open Studio at The Art Room in Lafayette

By Jean Follmer



Pictured left to right: Gi Gi Voris, Gemma Davies, Anya Rogala, Valerie Margerum, Shauna Brown, Gabby Lichtig, Emma Netland, Kay Vannelli

The Art Room has done business in Lafayette for ten years. Located on Lafayette Circle (across from Chow), it offers a variety of art instruction to ages 4 through adults. Classes are offered at the studio and enrichment classes are available at many local schools. A recent Friday afternoon found owner Gi Gi Voris teaching her Teen Open Studio class. The class ranged from 8th graders at Stanley to seniors at Acalanes and many have been going to The Art Room for years. Voris assigns at least one project for each of the 6-week sessions. Beyond that, students are encouraged to explore new mediums and

work on projects that interest them. The class is a "freeform, open class." Voris is there for guidance and assistance and her approach with the teens is relaxed. "They know where everything is," says Voris, and there are teenage supplies "that the little kids don't get to use."

The students openly expressed their feelings about Voris and The Art Room. "It's the best class in the world," said Acalanes Junior Gabby Lichtig. Emma Netland, also an Acalanes Junior, is the Arts Editor for the Acalanes Blueprint. An Art Room student since the 6th grade, Emma says, "It's a little art room family. I love it." Freshman

Photo Jean Follmer

Gemma Davies agreed, saying, "I like that she (Voris) will give you advice about expressing yourself. It's a place where you can do your own stuff," while getting input as you need it.

Two students indicated an interest in art-related careers. While painting a panda, freshman Shauna Brown said she might go into fashion design. Senior Kay Vannelli is a finalist in the Bay Area Flowers Heritage Foundation high school art competition. She works on "paper cutouts" and one of them was entered in the AIDS awareness competition. Kay has attended The Art Room since 4th grade and likes it because, "It's a very relaxed at-

mosphere." She plans to go to art school for college.

Voris takes great pride in this class and in the rest of the offerings at her school. She runs The Art Room because she "loves art." It's far from a job to her, but her hobby and her passion. This is quickly evidenced by the first walk through the door. It's inviting, it's warm and it's uniquely Lamorinda. For more information, visit www.theartroom.com.

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Lamorinda Housing Market Much Merrier Than the Real Estate Grinches Might Have Us Believe

By Val Cook-Watkins

With another holiday season upon us, there is a lot for which we can all be thankful. Living in the beautiful Lamorinda area is certainly one of them. The real estate grinches – those doomsayers we keep reading about in the news media – might have us believe that all is gloomy in the housing market these days. But don't believe 'em, at least not when it comes to our local communities.

Here are a few figures to think about as you finish up those holiday leftovers:

- In October 2007, the latest figures available, the average price for a home in the Lamorinda area was \$1,187,000, according to the Country Costa Association of Realtors. That's a 10.4% jump in prices year over year!
- Unit sales for the month were down overall in the Lamorinda area, but not by much. This year there were 52 homes sold in October, just nine homes less than last year during the same period.
- Year-to-date figures did show some leveling off in average prices, which is to be expected after a sharp run-up of as much as 50% over the previous few years.
- Lafayette had a 6% YTD dip in average prices, but a 12% increase in the number of sales; Moraga had a 2% increase in average prices YTD, but a 7% decline in sales; and Orinda saw sales increase 1.3% but average prices off 7%.

The Lamorinda real estate market is actually a whole lot merrier than you might think based on the evening newscasts or some of the local papers. Some media pundits tend to lump all of the nation's real estate into one. But the reality is that we have countless "microclimates" in the real estate market with some areas doing better or worse than others.

So how are we doing here in the Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga region? All in all, surprisingly well. It is true that sales are off slightly from last year at this time. Still, most homeowners couldn't care less about how many homes we Realtors sell. What they care about is the value of their number one investment. And guess what? Prices are holding their own locally or even going up in some cases.

To be sure, homes are still selling in the Lamorinda area, and in many cases with multiple offers. Those properties that are located close to downtown areas, well priced and nicely presented are attracting lots of interest

from buyers. Level-in homes on cul-de-sacs in particular are seeing multiple offers.

If you have been thinking about selling your home, now couldn't be a better time. Contrary to popular belief, the holiday season is actually one of the best times of year to sell.

Your home is often at its best this time of year, with brightly colored decorations, the warm glow of the fireplace, and the wonderful aroma of holiday dinners cooking in the kitchen. Allowing buyers to view your home during this special season lets them better picture their own family enjoying the holidays there in years to come.

Because fewer homes are listed for sale this time of year, sellers have less competition for buyers' attention. More than a few agents have found that the highest prices for homes often come very early in the new year. As more homes come onto the market in the spring and summer, buyers are in a much stronger negotiating position to drive the lowest price.

Consumers who are out looking during the holidays and immediately after tend to be very motivated to buy or else they wouldn't be out there. Corporations often plan relocations of



Val Cook-Watkins, Manager of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage's Orinda offices, provides the above tips. A 30-year real estate veteran, Watkins oversees a talented team of 78 real estate professionals in the East Bay. Her offices are located at 5 Moraga Way and 85 Moraga Way in Orinda, and she can be reached at 925-253-4660 or by e-mail at vcookwatkins@cbnocal.com.

employees and newly hired personnel at the beginning of the year, creating a pool of potential buyers. In addition, families with children in school often begin looking early in the year so they can close before the end of the school year and summer vacation.

If you're concerned that listing your home will take up too much of your during this special time of year, think again. A professional Realtor can take care of everything so you can simply enjoy the magic of the season.

I'd like to close by offering my best wishes to all of you and your families for a healthy and prosperous New Year!

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Lamorinda Home Sales continued

LAFAYETTE	Last reported: 5
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$945,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,475,000
MORAGA	Last reported: 3
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$285,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,475,000
ORINDA	Last reported: 12
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$700,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$2,115,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal Resource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California Resource. Neither Cal Resource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE
3678 Hastings Court, \$1,020,000, 3 Bdrms, 1926 SqFt, 1959 YrBlit, 12-3-07
3301 Moraga Blvd, \$945,000, 4 Bdrms, 2023 SqFt, 1951 YrBlit, 11-27-07
1127 Rahara Drive, \$1,475,000, 4 Bdrms, 2929 SqFt, 1948 YrBlit, 11-30-07
19 Springhill Lane, \$1,345,000, 4 Bdrms, 2797 SqFt, 1947 YrBlit, 11-30-07
4030 Valente Dr, \$1,368,000, 4 Bdrms, 1812 SqFt, 1973 YrBlit, 11-30-07

MORAGA
2067 Ascot Drive #241, \$285,000, 1 Bdrms, 790 SqFt, 1971 YrBlit, 11-30-07
50 San Pablo Court, \$1,475,000, 4 Bdrms, 3085 SqFt, 1975 YrBlit, 11-27-07
509 Woodminster Drive, \$570,000, 3 Bdrms, 1572 SqFt, 1975 YrBlit, 12-6-07

ORINDA
29 Bates Boulevard, \$1,250,000, 3 Bdrms, 2357 SqFt, 1956 YrBlit, 11-27-07
178 Crestview Drive, \$2,115,000, 5 Bdrms, 3732 SqFt, 2002 YrBlit, 11-30-07
1 El Verano Drive, \$700,000, 3 Bdrms, 2307 SqFt, 1939 YrBlit, 11-30-07
38 Honey Hill Road, \$1,200,000, 3 Bdrms, 2368 SqFt, 1961 YrBlit, 11-30-07
67 La Cuesta Road, \$865,000, 4 Bdrms, 1572 SqFt, 1951 YrBlit, 11-27-07
21 Las Vegas Road, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 2463 SqFt, 1939 YrBlit, 11-27-07
728 Miner Road, \$1,273,000, 5 Bdrms, 3529 SqFt, 1941 YrBlit, 12-5-07
285 Moraga Way, \$950,000, 3 Bdrms, 1410 SqFt, 1942 YrBlit, 11-30-07
201 Orchard Road, \$763,000, 3 Bdrms, 1491 SqFt, 1950 YrBlit, 11-30-07
54 Sleepy Hollow Ln, \$1,150,000, 4 Bdrms, 2057 SqFt, 1950 YrBlit, 12-6-07
21 Snowberry Lane, \$1,970,000, 2 Bdrms, 2214 SqFt, 1949 YrBlit, 11-30-07
51 Van Ripper Lane, \$1,139,500, 3 Bdrms, 1671 SqFt, 1953 YrBlit, 11-30-07

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Ellen Peterson:

Sobering Thoughts to Keep Parents on Their Toes

By Sophie Braccini



Ellen Peterson

Photo Sophie Braccini

The typical American teenager will see 100,000 beer commercials before the age of 18, more than for sneakers, gum and jeans combined." This was Ellen Peterson's last sobering thought, as featured in a recent edition of her newsletter. The December 1st issue was labeled #314. For the past twelve years Peterson, a DVC Psychology teacher, has sent a bi-weekly letter to more than a thousand addresses (both virtual

and hard mail), about alcohol and drug use in the Acalanes School District.

Peterson was teaching a "Peer Counseling" class at Acalanes High School in the nineties. She observed first-hand the surge in drug and alcohol use. When the media came on campus to report on the rising rate of substance abuse in suburbia, the district reacted and Peterson organized a large community con-

sultation on the issue that attracted 115 people, including all the high school principals, the police departments, a judge, parents, educators, and even the FBI. The three meetings that ensued gave birth to task forces and Peterson's newsletter. "Parents were unaware of what was going on," said Peterson, "one of their demands was to get an accurate picture of substance abuse on the campuses."

The newsletter covers any and every possible substance abuse issue in the District and talks about national trends as well. Each issue has a theme: medicine abuse, new alcoholic products, parents' responsibilities, proms, gender specific issues, media impacts including films, music, advertisement and the internet. Anyone can join Peterson's mailing list by sending her a message at ellen.peterson@comcast.net. The newsletter can also be found on the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) web site: www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/parents/ and on high schools web sites.

AUHSD Superintendent Jim Negri first met Peterson as she was busy copying her newsletter on the district's copy machine. "Ellen is one of those dedicated volunteers who keep working on issues they



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really care about," says Negri. In recognition of her work, the district awarded Peterson the Su Stauffer Friends of Education Memorial Award in 2006. "We are grateful for what she does and are happy to provide support in every little way we can," adds Negri.

The number of people registering to receive the newsletter has increased over time. Peterson believes this is because parents have stopped looking the other way. "I have seen a shift in parents' tolerance for alcohol consumption over the years," says Peterson, "one of the reasons may be the discovery of what alcohol does to teens' brains."

Drinking affects the pre-frontal cortex that controls impulses and inhibitions. That part of the brain is the latest to develop, well into adulthood. "The main concern with alcohol is that it makes kids do things they later regret," explains Peterson, "alcohol abuse is linked to unprotected sex, fights, vandalism, pregnancy, not to even mention the terrible danger of drunk driving. One in four teenagers drinking before the age of 15 will have an alcohol problem," she warns.

Alcohol is not the only substance our teens are abusing. Marijuana has held a favorite place for years. According to Peterson, its use has remained stable over the past twelve years in our district. "It's at all the parties," she says, "especially if there is no parental presence." Marijuana is the more common problem reported by local substance abuse treatment centers. Marijuana addicts just "zone out" and lose their motivation to do anything other than consume their drug. According to Peterson, 50% of the students in the Acalanes school district will have tried mar-

ijuana by the time they graduate, and 15%-20% are regular users.

If marijuana's consumption has not changed, other substances have appeared in the students' palette of choice for mischief. Opiates, pain relievers such as Vicodin, Percocet and Oxycontin, and stress-relieving drugs such as Valium find their way from medicine cabinets to teen pockets. Steroid use is on the rise among girls wanting to lose weight as well as boys. Ecstasy's use subsided after a surge at the beginning of the 21st century,

but Peterson fears that the use of breathalyzers at parties might have the adverse effect of increasing ecstasy or marijuana intake before parties.

As habits and teen trends change all the time, parents left with an overload of information can feel overwhelmed. "Alcohol is a rite of passage in our civilization, as a culture we celebrate everything with alcohol," acknowledges Peterson, "if parents want to protect their children from abuse they need to start by modeling sobriety."

Acalanes Sophomores Improve Castle Rock Park

By Jean Follmer



Acalanes sophomores work hard at Castle Rock Recreation Area

Photo Jean Follmer

A number of Acalanes sophomores spent a recent Saturday working in Castle Rock Recreation Area. If you haven't been there, Castle Rock is part of the East Bay Regional Park District. It's located in Walnut Creek adjacent to Diablo Foothills and is undergoing a major renovation.

Some of the students' labors included planting trees and shrubs, watering and digging a large drainage ditch. The workday was organized by Sophomore Stu-

dent Body Association (SBA) President Lindsay Cope and SBA Secretary Hayley Windther. Every Acalanes student has an annual mandatory number of volunteer hours to fulfill and the hours increase at each grade level (sophomores have 12 hours). Cope said "At least 50% of the hours have to be outside of the school." There was a lot hard work and camaraderie at the job site and it paid off. At the end of their workday, they'd made notable and positive changes at Castle Rock.

Young Children Learn Holiday Kindness



From the Fire Station: Captian Bob Heaston, Fire Fighter Rob Panucci, Engineer Mark Watson Kids on the couch L-R: Max Rittmann, Adam Harper, Connor Fritch, Xavier Esquer, Lleyton Allen, Joe Gonzales, and George Destino (front edge of the chair)

Seven friends from a Moraga preschool, all born in December, celebrated their 4th birthdays together earlier this month.

In lieu of a gift for each boy, guests were asked to bring a gift for one of the boys, and a second gift for charity.

The boys delivered the gifts to the Fire Station on Moraga Road the morning of December 15. They were rewarded for their generosity with a tour of the station and the chance to climb inside a real fire engine!

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How Does Springhill Elementary Pay It Forward?

By Jean Follmer

Seven years ago, Springhill Elementary implemented its Pay It Forward (PIF) program. If you're not familiar with the book

"Pay It Forward" by Catherine Ryan Hyde, the premise is, "Think of an idea for world change and put it into action."

Principal Bruce Wodhams said Springhill tries "to create a culture of giving, often anonymously." Springhill does this on local, national and international fronts.

After September 11, Springhill worked with the Red Cross to benefit the New York Police Department and the Fire Department New York. Springhill supports Trust in Education/ Budd MacKenzie to fulfill needs like education, healthcare and infrastructure in Lalander, Afghanistan. When Concord's Holbrook Elementary fell victim to fire and vandalism, Springhill raised funds to help rebuild their gymnasium and play structure.

At the beginning of each school year, staff chooses a new PIF theme. The current year's theme is "Gratitude and Caring." Last year's theme was "Kindness and Appreciation." Within the theme is a monthly Spirit Reminder. For December, the Spirit Reminder is "Show gratitude and caring by reaching out to those in need." Wodhams said the "student council holds a fundraiser before winter break" each year. In past years, they've helped homeless shelters and others. This year, the kids decided to help Save the Bay clean up the oil spill and are



Mrs. Thompson's 1st grade class during Spirit Wednesday

Photo Jean Follmer

holding a Jamba Juice sale. All proceeds will go to Save the Bay.

Other current Springhill efforts include collecting food for the Contra Costa Food Bank, Girl Scout Troop #814 is collecting toiletries for the needy and Girl Scout Troop #1116 is collecting LMYA soccer uniforms for Africa. Last year they collected over 600 soccer jerseys and sent them to a village in Kenya. Springhill experienced the direct benefits of PIF when Girl Scout Troop #519 volunteered hours of weeding, planting and gardening on the campus. Some other annual fundraisers include Coins for a Cure, Pennies for Patients, Ani-

mal Rescue Foundation and the Zane Melmed Memorial Fund.

PIF is reinforced daily and PIF acts are recognized at Spirit Wednesday and in the weekly student and parent bulletins. Each Wednesday, the entire school (many wearing Springhill Spirit Wear) gathers by the flagpole for Spirit Wednesday. A different class is featured each week to lead the Pledge of Allegiance and give examples of PIF. A recent Wednesday featured Mrs. Thompson's 1st grade class. When asked for an example, Nick Catalanello said "Be nice to your teachers and your family." When later asked what PIF meant, Lizzy

Follmer said "It's really mean to be mean and you should do what's right."

The PIF efforts of individuals "remain anonymous in order to promote the altruistic and selfless nature of the act." Wodhams believes it's critical to begin this type of character building in kindergarten. He said, "If high school is their first exposure (to these types of acts) it's not something that's just part of their fiber." He went on to say, "When they leave here, I like for it to be second nature to give back."

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School Bus Detention

By Cathy Tyson

Although it was quite a small incident, it had major ramifications. Earlier this month there was a minor fender, or rather mirror-bender, by a school bus from Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School making its afternoon rounds. It would have been a non-event, but for the hour it took for the California Highway Patrol (CHP) to document the accident, and the driver's insistence that the children were not allowed to leave the bus without CHP approval. No one was hurt, and by all accounts, it was a very minor accident. The driver asserted he was following Durham Bus Company protocol in not releasing the children.

Tired of waiting, some of the students used their cell phones to call parents for rides home. As parents arrived at the scene, the driver informed them that the children would not be released until the CHP arrived. Parents insisted that they had every right in the world to take their

children home.

What happened next is the reason for our current investigation into exactly what are parents' rights and what are bus company policies and what's required for the CHP to document an accident. Some parents were angry that they were barred from picking up their kids. The driver, followed what he believed was state law and company regulations, refused to let the kids disembark.

Lamorinda School Bus Program contracts with Durham School Services to provide 22 buses that serve Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda. Durham General Manager Joe Cebillas was adamant that Durham follows all state laws. "It's frustrating, but we follow the law," mentioned Cebillas. When asked exactly what law that would be, he was unable to specify.

After extensive research, neither the California Vehicle Code, nor the California Code of

Regulations mentions anything about detaining children. However there are regulations that require the CHP to be notified in the event of an accident, even a very minor one, along with a slew of other rules.

CHP Public Affairs Officer Scott Yox said, "It is not absolutely necessary to hold the children." He went on to say that he was unaware of a specific regulation that prohibited the bus company from releasing the children, and that Durham was probably trying to protect itself from liability. Officer Rick Weaver, who is the School Pupil Safety Officer and is in charge of the school bus program said, "as far as the law's concerned, we can't hold up the kids any longer than necessary."

Just before deadline, Lamorinda School Bus Program (LSBP) Program Manager Juliet Hansen reported that Durham's CHP contract instructs company drivers specifically to hold chil-

dren prior to release by the CHP. In addition, Hansen noted that LSBP is responsible for its student passengers and is clearly concerned with which bus stop they exit to ensure their safety. Students are required to have permission to get off at a different stop than their usual location.

Although a Moraga Police Officer was at the scene, CHP has jurisdiction over all school bus incidents.

Bottom line, two out of three CHP officers report that parents can demand the release of their children. Holding children may just be a Durham policy, although when parents sign up for the service, they are not informed that their children may be detained indefinitely on a bus. It's still a bit unclear what LSBP's policy is, in part because school bus accidents are so rare, but according to Hansen, they will definitely be looking for clarification.

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business briefs

Lafayette Mercantile Open for Business

Lavande Spa, 3589 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette - 299 8877
 Ribbon Cutting ceremony with the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce: January 10th at 4:30 pm
 Lavande Spa offers nail care, massages and packaged beauty treatments such as "mother-daughter manicure/pedicure" or "massage for two".

Yankee Pier, 3593 Mount Diablo Blvd. Lafayette
www.yankeepier.com - 283.4100
 To open on December 27th; will be open on New Year's Eve with regular menu. Yankee Pier is of the Lark Creek Group, offering market fresh fish entrees, seafood platters, salads as well as a burger alternative to fish, in a New England atmosphere.

Jos. A. Bank, 3599 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette
www.josbank.com - 962-1051
 Jos. A. Bank presents men's apparel. The chain has more than 400 locations nationwide and specializes in high end men's clothing from business to casual.

Duchess Boutique, 3587 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette,
Shopduchess.com - 962.0208
 Hours: Mon.-Fri., 10-6; Sat., 11-6; Sun., 11-5
 Duchess Boutique is a women's apparel store managed by Erica Perez, former manager of Flaunt in Danville. From the relaxed to the most sophisticated, from bohemian to classy the store offers tops and pants by Young or Fabulous and Broke, cocktail dresses by LaRok as well as shoes and hand bags by San Francisco creator Goldenbleu.

Set to open in January:
Misto Lino, with a complete line of high quality goods for the home as well as personal items: linens, home care, décor accessories, pampering products; Powell's Sweet Shoppe, an old-fashion, old-world candy store with stores in California, Colorado and Idaho.

Mercantile Parking:
 During the day you can choose between street parking or outside parking in the back of the building. The basement parking structure is open to the public evenings and weekends.

From Center to Center

Beauty Source, 1460 suite E, Moraga Rd, Moraga -376-0802
 The store that relocated from the Rheem Center to the Moraga Center held its ribbon cutting ceremony on Friday December 14th. The event was presided over by new Chamber of Commerce President Edy Schwartz and was attended by incoming Mayor Linda Deschambault, Moraga Center owner Joan Bruzzone and numerous fellow Chamber members and customers. The new store offers beauty products, includes a hair salon and "Utopia" a face and body works that features a complete menu of facials, peels and massage therapy services.

Union Bank Arrives in Orinda

Union Bank of California 140 Brockwood Road suite 101, Orinda
www.uboc.com - 253-8980
 The full service community bank opened a new East Bay location in Orinda on December 10th. The bank totals 317 offices in California and strives to service both consumers and businesses.

News from the Chambers of Commerce:

Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, 100 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette, www.lafayettechamber.org • 925-284-7404

Lafayette Chamber elected Larry Blodgett its 2008 Business Person of the Year. He will be honored during the annual membership meeting (see below). A business man and great community volunteer, Blodgett is the 3rd generation owner of Blodgett's Floor Covering. He served as a member of the Board and President of the Chamber of Commerce and was a member of the Lafayette Design Review Commission. He and his wife Karen have made innumerable personal contributions to community organizations.

Friday, January 25, 6:00pm at the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa. Annual membership meeting with introduction of the 2008 Board of Directors. Mayor Mike Anderson will be giving the "State of the City Address". Included in the evening program will be music provided by Generations in Jazz. Reservations required, form on the Chamber's web site.

Chamber of Commerce of Moraga,; www.moragachamber.org

The Chamber elected a new President, Edy Schwartz. She addresses the business community: "This past year the board of directors has worked very hard to get the structure of the Chamber in place. By Laws have been written, an application for non-profit status has been applied for and many other basic things that build a strong foundation for an organization are in place. With all of that work done, this year's Chamber is free to attend to other matters. Our main goal for 2008 is to continue to build a business community where business owners, managers and workers feel connected to other businesses and the community at large. We will also continue to work to encourage educate and promote residents to Shop Moraga First so our businesses will prosper and the Town will receive much needed sales tax dollars. In January we will send out a survey to get a feel for what the membership would like their Chamber to provide for them. We will also offer mentoring to small business owners who would like support in finding ways to increase their business. In March the Chamber is putting on a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) training designed specifically for businesses. The Chamber will have their annual Luau at the end of the summer and will be a sponsor to the Community Faire in the spring."

Orinda Chamber of Commerce, 24 Orinda Way, Orinda, www.orindachamber.org:

The Orinda Chamber of Commerce held a very successful Holiday Mixer on December 13th in the Office of the First Republic Bank, 224 Brookwood Road in Orinda. President Keith Miller and Executive Director Candy Kattenburg assisted Office manager Gail Woznak in hosting the party while Real Estate Agent Mark Shaw entertained the audience with his violin.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com or contact Lamorinda Weekly at 925-377-0977.

Helping Managers and Executives Get Back to Work

By Sophie Braccini

When Glen Zamanian was laid off in July, he knew what he had to do. "This happens to people all the time," says the Lafayette resident, "but here in Lamorinda, there is an organization that helps experienced white collar workers seeking a job paying 60K and up."

The California Department of Employment sponsors a non-profit group called Experience Unlimited (E.U.), which is managed by volunteer members. The group organizes workshop, gives access to resources, provides mentors and gives each participant the structure, moral support and discipline that are needed to get back to the workforce. Participation is free but members are asked to give sixteen hours of work back to the group every month.

Every Tuesday morning at 9:00 am the group meets at 49 Knox Drive in Lafayette. This event provides an opportunity for E.U. alumni and members to have fun, network, and socialize. On average, about forty people attend the meetings; the age bracket is 40 to 60 years old, both men and women. Some were mortgage brokers, other V.P.'s of Finance or I.T. managers. Some have part time or short-term jobs, others are unemployed.

The meeting starts with members sharing their news, then the session breaks up into workshops. Newcomers are always welcome; they are introduced to the group's modus operandi and choose an area in which to volunteer: operations, marketing, I.T. or training. They



Tony Friday starts the E.U. meeting

Photo Sophie Braccini

hear about the different services offered by the group such as a counseling session for those who have personal issues, job search techniques, networking or salary negotiation.

The President of E.U. is elected by the group and is a job seeker as well as a volunteer. The current president is the very charismatic Tony Friday, who opened a recent session with a pep talk that had power and liveliness. "Keeping the energy up and firing up the attitude are some of the keys to success," said Friday. Since this group was created to help mature individuals, they are not shy to acknowledge that they sometimes encounter age discrimination. "We have all heard that people over forty cost too much," confirms Friday, "small companies can't afford us."

In order to overcome the age barrier the group proposes different approaches to job seeking. One of the tactics consists of first researching the hiring manager for the position that is

of interest. Once that person is found, one member of the group, or alumni, will be chosen to write a referral letter introducing the applicant. That person will have a logical connection to the hiring manager and will make sure that the candidate is well qualified for the job. E.U. has found that 80% of all jobs are obtained through referrals rather than through the usual ad-answering process.

The second step is to send a "qualification profile" along with the referral letter. This document is a chart that presents on one side the requirements for the position and on the other side the candidate's experiences that most closely match them. This document replaces the traditional

resume. For those older applicants, a long resume starting in the 80's can lead to rejection. It is recommended to bring a resume for the interview, but people who have used this technique report not even having to take it out of their briefcase.

When asked how long it takes to find that new job, Friday is a bit vague, "I've never heard of anybody who didn't get a job; usually it takes 3 to 9 months for someone to get back to work." Zamanian confirms the effectiveness of E.U.: "Résumés don't get jobs, people do. Here at Experience Unlimited we help people network to expand their reach and help new employers grow."

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Can Farmers Markets Sustain Local Food Production?

By Sophie Braccini



Year-round Farmers' Market on Sunday morning in Moraga Photo Sophie Braccini

Fong Tchieng's farm has been a favorite at the Moraga Farmers' Market for more than two years. A family of expert gardeners who came from Laos in the 80's manages the 20-acre Fresno farm. The parents farm while the children study at UC Davis. Every week they bring to markets a wide variety of vegetables from the most classic to some interesting variations such as orange beets, Chinese greens or Jerusalem artichokes.

From the individual artisan, to large farms, to family businesses, merchants at farmers markets come in all shapes and flavors. With the Tchiengs, they share a passion for their trade and are not afraid of hard work. Their diversity may be what makes the year round Moraga market so successful.

The market started operating once a month in the parking lot at the Moraga Center in 2004. It became a weekly summer market the following

year, and expanded to year-round operation one winter ago. According to Gayle Griver, of the California Market Association (which manages this market), what makes its success is the blend of fresh and tasty products offered year round. "We are blessed to live in an area with a lot of microclimates that provides a wide variety of crops," explains Griver.

On the opposite side of the market to the Tchiengs, Happy Boy Farm from Santa Cruz sells only organic vegetables. Greg Beccio's farm is larger, with 230 acres, 110 different produces and up to 70 employees in season. Farmers markets are a big part of his sales, about 50%, the rest being sold to restaurant or stores such as the Monterey Market in Berkeley. People who work the market can have different jobs on the farm; some are part time employees who may live in different cities.

Olivera Egg Farm is a large operation, too. The grandfather of the present

owner founded the chicken farm in San Jose in 1948. Now the South Peninsula city doesn't want to harbor 600,000 chickens within its border and the operation has moved to Stockton. Farmers' markets represent just a small percentage of Olivera's sale, "for us this is more about brand recognition."

Steve Gentry, the Orinda beekeeper, has the same marketing objective with a very different type of operation. "I sell only a small percentage of my honey at farmers' markets," says Steve, "I go there so people can put a face on my name. My objective is also educational, and I always display a hive in my stand so kids can learn about bees." Steve confesses that he works with bees out of passion; his primary source of income is his rental properties.

Greg Young, who owns two boats in Monterey, has no other source of income. "Consumers do not realize what a hard life it is," says the fisherman. He fishes all week for

salmon, tuna, halibut and cod; cuts, packages and sells at markets during the weekend with wife Edyta. "We do it out of our passion for bringing an exceptional product directly to the people," says Young. "We are a disappearing trade ourselves, within 10 years there won't be any salmon left in Northern California. Water from rivers is diverted for human needs and the fish are just vanishing." He sells to farmers' markets in San Francisco, Morgan Hill and San Jose.

Holding Farm is another example of how a local operation can find a successful outlet in local markets and restaurants. The family raises cows in the hills of Lafayette and the meat that is sold at the market comes only from their herd. For the Holding Farm, farmers' markets and restaurants are the means to keep the middle man out and the only way for a small local farming operation to stay profitable.

Farmers markets can be a great way to start a business.

Bay Bread started to sell its specialty breads in the Palo Alto farmers' market 15 years ago. Today Pascal Rigo, the French baker, operates seven bakeries, a restaurant, two manufacturing plants for wholesale of organic bread and is a partner in an organic mill in Utah.

Perhaps this will also be the destiny of Judi Welden of Terra Soap. She just started to sell her soaps at the market. She makes her cold process soaps out of lye in her Walnut Creek home. She creates crafty custom soaps with natural oils and fair trade shea butter and even teaches soap classes.

"Most merchants are farmers who sell what they grow," says Griver, "but we are allowed 20% non-farmers, so we can bring tamales, popcorn, Chinese dumplings and breads. We hope to get poultry and cheese as well." "Locavores*" of Lamorinda rejoice!

* a Locavor is someone who strives to eat only locally produced food

Correction:

In our December 12 article entitled "Amoroma Brings the Community Together at New Year's," we inadvertently printed an incorrect phone number for Ristorante Amoroma. The correct number is **925-377-7662**. Our apologies to the kind woman with the other number!

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•• updated December 26, 2007 ••			
American			
Bistro	3287 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		283-7108
Chow Restaurant	53 Lafayette Cir, Laf		962-2469
Hungry Hunter	3201 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		938-3938
Quiznos	3651 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		962-0200
Ranch House	1012 School St, Mor		376-5127
Terzetto Cuisine	1419 Moraga Way, Mor		376-3832
The Cheese Steak Shop	3455 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		283-1234
BBQ			
Bo's Barbecue	3422 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		283-7133
Burger Joint			
Flippers	960 Moraga Rd, Laf		284-1567
Nation's Giant Hamburgers	400 Park, Mor		376-8888
Nation's Giant Hamburgers	76 Moraga Way, Ori		254-8888
Café			
Express Cafe	3732 Mt. Diablo Blvd # 170, Laf		283-7170
Ferrari-Lucca Delicatessens	23 Lafayette Cir, Laf		299-8040
Geppetto's coffee	87 Orinda Way, Ori		253-9894
California Cuisine			
Gigi's	1005 Brown St., Laf		962-0882
Metro Lafayette	3524 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		284-4422
Shelby's	2 Theatre Sq, Ori		254-9687
Chinese			
Asia Palace Restaurant	1460 B Moraga Rd, Mor		376-0809
Chef Chao Restaurant	343 Rheem Blvd, Mor		376-1740
China Moon Restaurant	380 Park St, Mor		376-1828
The Great Wall Restaurant	3500 Golden Gate Way, Laf		284-3500
Hsiangs Mandarin Cuisine	1 Orinda Way # 1, Ori		253-9852
Lily's House	3555 Mt. Diablo Blvd #A, Laf		284-7569
Mandarin Flower	581 Moraga Rd, Mor		376-7839
Panda Express	3608 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		962-0288
Szechwan Chinese Restaurant	79 Orinda Way, Laf		254-2020
Uncle Yu's Szechuan	999 Oak Hill Rd, Laf		283-1688
Yan's Restaurant	3444 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		284-2228
Coffee Shop			
Millie's Kitchen	1018 Oak Hill Rd #A, Laf		283-2397
Rising Loaf	3643 Mt. Diablo Blvd Ste B, Laf		284-8816
Squirrel's Coffee Shop	998 Moraga Rd, Laf		284-7830
Village Inn Café	290 Village Square, Ori		254-6080
Continental			
Petar's Restaurant	32 Lafayette Cir, Laf		284-7117
Vino Restaurant	3531 Plaza Way, Laf		284-1330
Duck Club Restaurant	3287 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		283-7108
Hawaiian Grill			
Lava Pit	2 Theatre Square, St. 142, Ori		253-1338
Indian			
India Palace	3740 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		284-5700
Swad Indian Cuisine	3602 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		962-9575
Italian			
Giardino	3406 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		283-3869
La Finestra Ristorante	100 Lafayette Cir, St. 101, Laf		284-5282
La Piazza	15 Moraga Way, Ori		253-9191
Mangia Ristorante Pizzeria	975 Moraga Rd, Laf		284-3081
Michael's	1375 Moraga Way, Mor		376-4300
Mondello's	337 Rheem Blvd, Mor		376-2533
Pizza Antica	3600 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		299-0500
Postino	3565 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		299-8700
Ristorante Amoroma	360 Park St, Mor		377-7662
Japanese			
Asia Palace Sushi Bar	1460 B Moraga Rd, Mor		376-0809
Blue Ginko	3518-A Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		962-9020
Kane Sushi	3474 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		284-9709
Niwa Restaurant	1 Camino Sobrante # 6, Ori		254-1606
Serika Restaurant	2 Theatre Sq # 118, Ori		254-7088
Tamami's Japanese Restaurant	356 Park St, Mor		376-2872
Yu Sushi	19 Moraga Way, Ori		253-8399
Jazz Dinner Club			
Joe's of Lafayette	3707 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Laf		299-8807
The Orinda House	65 Moraga Way, Ori		258-4445
Mediterranean			
Alex's	2 Theatre Sq # 105, Ori		254-5290
Nino's Bay	#2 Theater Square, Ste. 153, Ori		253-1327
Oasis Café	3594 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		299-8822
Per Tutti Ristorante	3576 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		284-5225
Mexican			
360 Gourmet Burrito	3655 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		299-1270
El Charro Mexican Dining	3339 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		283-2345
El Jaro Mexican Cafe	3563 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		283-6639
La Cocina Mexicana	23 Orinda Way, Ori		258-9987
Mucho wraps	1375-B Moraga Way, Mor		377-1203
Baja Fresh Mexican Grill	3596 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		283-8740
Celia's Restaurant	3666 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		283-8288
El Balazo	3518D Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		284-8700
Maya Mexican Grill	74 Moraga Way, Ori		258-9049
Numero Uno Taqueria	3616 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		299-1333
Pizza			
Aladino's Pizza	3614 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		283-6363
Mountain Mike's Pizza	504 Center St, Mor		377-6453
Pennini's	1375 Moraga Rd, Mor		376-1515
Round Table Pizza	361 Rheem Blvd, Mor		376-1411
Round Table Pizza	3637 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		283-0404
Village Pizza	19 Orinda Way # Ab, Ori		254-1200
Zamboni's Pizza	1 Camino Sobrante # 4, Ori		254-2800
Sandwiches/Deli			
Bianca's Deli	1480 Moraga Rd # A, Mor		376-4400
Europa Hofbrau Deli & Pub	64 Moraga Way, Ori		254-7202
Gourmet Bistro Café	484 Center St, Mor		376-1551
Kasper's Hot Dogs	103 Moraga Way, Ori		253-0766
Noah's Bagels	3518 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		299-0716
Orinda Deli	19 F Orinda Way, Ori		254-1990
Subway	396 Park St., Mor		376-2959
Subway	3322 Mt. Diablo Blvd #B, Laf		284-2627
Subway	Theatre Square, Ori		258-0470
Singaporean/Malaysian			
Kopitiam	3647 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf		299-1653
South American			
The Patio Tapas and Restaurant	960 Moraga Road, Laf		299-6885
Steak			
Casa Orinda	20 Bryant Way, Ori		254-2981
Tea			
Patisserie Lafayette	71 Lafayette Cir, Laf		283-2226
Tea Party by Appointment	107 Orinda Way, Ori		254-2206
Thai			
Amarin Thai Cuisine	3555 Mt. Diablo Blvd # B, Laf		283-8883
Baan Thai	99 Orinda Way, Ori		253-0989
Royal Siam	512 Center St, Mor		377-0420
Siam Orchid	23 Orinda Way # F, Ori		253-1975

The Lamorinda Weekly (LW) Restaurant Guide is not paid advertising; our intent is to provide a useful reference guide. We hope that we have included all Lamorinda restaurants on this page, except those that told us they did not wish to be listed. LW is not liable for errors or omissions. In the event that we have inadvertently printed misinformation or excluded a restaurant please let us know (info@lamorindaweekly.com) so that we may correct our list for the next issue.

Orinda Resident Making a Difference: Unique Program Opens Doors for Developmentally Disabled Adults

By Jennifer Wake



RES SUCCESS founder Ian Bremner stands next to student's artwork displayed along the walls of the Pleasant Hill facility
Photo Jennifer Wake

Most parents breathe a sigh of relief when their child turns 18. But for parents of children with a developmental disability or mental retardation, the 18-year-old milestone can mean a turbulent transition from the safe haven of a school district's special education program to the uncertainty of adult services offered by the state.

And finding placement can be difficult, especially if your child has severe behavioral problems.

These issues were clear to Orinda resident Ian Bremner, who set out to make a difference. In

1994, he founded RES SUCCESS – a non-profit day-treatment program serving behaviorally-challenged adults with a dual diagnosis of mental illness and developmental disabilities – thanks to two grants he received from the Regional Center of the East Bay.

"We work with mild, moderate severe and profoundly disabled individuals: some who need help with grooming and hygiene, toileting and eating; others who might break things or hurt themselves," Bremner said, who has worked with the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC), the Opportunity for Independence (OFI) and Behavioral Counseling and Research Center (BCRC), and is a member of the Contra Costa County Developmental Disabilities Council. "Our population would not be able to survive without these types of services."

Unfortunately, due to their behavioral problems, Bremner says many of RES SUCCESS' students have been demitted from other programs. Through his program's unique approach, Bremner and his staff have seen once dependent and depressed individuals become engaging, even joyful.

When Mike – one of the Pleasant Hill facility's students – came to RES SUCCESS, he was suffering from severe depression after being disciplined at other in-

stitutions for his behavioral problems. The staff suggested he use exercise as an outlet to express his frustrations.

"He loves to lift weights now. It has really built his confidence," Bremer said. Mike now does his weight lifting poses with the staff and will come up to visitors to proudly share his latest accomplishments. "What's unique about our behavior modification programs is we view behavior as a form of language. We believe a lot of these individuals know what they are doing. Every behavior is a request for help – they're lashing out because they're scared, hungry or frustrated."

The program utilizes art to pull people out of difficult situations, giving them a new focus as they work through their problems toward a resolution.

"Art is so expressive – you can't do it wrong," Bremner said. "You can get to people's emotional state and pull them out of a behavior."

Pleasant Hill facility manager Sandie Shields has seen how the use of art can help diffuse a situation. "Art can be very soothing; the rhythm calming. And when they're engaged in the art room, there is no need to establish eye contact and there are no negative consequences. We can remove them from the situation without

seeming hostile."

In addition to expressive arts, RES SUCCESS also offers individual and group therapy, vocational training, an education curriculum, communication skills support, and daily living activities.

Assistant Program Manager Megan Finley develops individual education plans for each of the 47 students at the Pleasant Hill facility, ensuring that the student's work is not too difficult, but not too easy either. "I have to make sure I keep the students happy; I can't overwhelm them," she said.

"We believe we can reduce maladaptive behaviors to help these individuals to live as independently as possible and find goals specific to match their dreams, such as having a job or living independently with friends," Bremner said.

Now with five locations (two day-treatment facilities, two residential programs in Martinez, and a new day-treatment facility in Pleasant Hill), the organization serves nearly 95 individuals between the ages of 18 and 59 from areas throughout the East Bay, including Lafayette and Moraga. Bremner hopes to open a new facility next year, and plans to expand to Danville and Pleasanton with a goal of serving 250 students within the next five years.

Most importantly, Bremner



Students paint sculptures in the art room at the Pleasant Hill RES SUCCESS Photo Jennifer Wake

doesn't want to lose sight of those most in need – the ones he says fall through the cracks.

"Our clients are incredible teachers – they teach kindness, compassion, and how to live in the moment," Bremner said. "When

you see the people we serve express themselves, it changes everything. Serving these individuals is a dream come true."

For information about RES SUCCESS, you can visit its Web site at: www.resuccess.org.

You Say You Want a Resolution

By Dr. Theresa Tsingis

Research shows that half of the people who make New Year's resolutions have given up on them by the end of June. If you're tired of declaring to lose weight at the beginning of every year and then breaking that vow, try gaining freedom from the endless cycle this year. There is a way to eat that can result in a healthier, more energetic version of yourself. There are workable, long-term ways to make good eating stick and knowing more about your unique metabolism has a lot to do with success.

We all share similarities in metabolism, yet there are ways in which we are metabolically unique. For example, we share the fundamentals of digestion and absorption. What differs between us is how well those processes work. Factors such as age, genetic inheritance, enzyme production and lifestyle influence digestion, absorption, and blood

sugar levels, sometimes in profound ways.

For example, after about age 30 or with certain gastrointestinal conditions, the digestive system produces less digestive juices, resulting in less nutrient absorption. An important example involves protein. When less protein is digested and absorbed, less will be incorporated into the body. Without protein, muscles cannot enlarge or maintain themselves. The immune system won't work optimally, and many metabolic processes can be affected. This has consequences if you are trying to become more fit.

It is imperative that you lose fat, not lean muscle, during a weight loss program. Muscle mass keeps metabolism going at a healthy rate, while fat has a slower metabolism. Two people weighing the same but with different body compositions have two different metabolisms and

also different levels of health.

One way your diet resolution can be more effective is by understanding your metabolic uniqueness. There are several ways to learn more about your metabolism. A quick way is through Bio-electrical Impedance Analysis (BIA), a type of body composition test which is very accurate, convenient and reliable.

This test provides your personal basal metabolic rate (how many calories you actually burn daily), and the accurate densities of body tissues such as fat and lean mass. BIA can be used to calculate your daily protein requirements and give clues to cell membrane health and water distribution. This test is relatively inexpensive and gauges weight loss effectively.

Another metabolic pitfall to rule out would be thyroid insufficiency. This can usually be done by your medical doctor. Nutri-

tionists with a functional nutrition perspective may also be able to uncover underlying hormonal imbalances that contribute to metabolic problems.

It's wise to design your eating for maximum health, energy and fitness based on your metabolism. This year, your diet resolution can make sense once and for all. As the Beatles sang, "Ya know, it's gonna be alright..." Have a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Dr. Theresa Tsingis, D.C., M.S. has a private nutrition practice at 89 Davis Rd., #180, Orinda.

Tel. (925) 360-2729 Email: drtsingis@comcast.net

Linda Watson Pays Tribute to Rotary

By Sophie Braccini



Linda Watson addresses the crowd of Rotarians, standing to her right David Englehart and to her left Paul Fillingner

Photo Sophie Braccini

It's not every Friday morning that Lamorinda Sunrise Rotarians receive such a treat: this month Linda Watson, an international diva and one of the most powerful Wagnerian sopranos of our time, came to the group's breakfast meeting at Postino to talk about her career.

In the audience, her twin brother Dave beamed with pride. Dave is the owner of Professional Automotive Services in Lafayette. They were raised in Orinda with three other brothers and sisters; on that early morning, three generations of Watsons came to hear Linda speak.

Watson started singing in a church choir at age four and studied the piano. She is blessed with a dramatic voice that carries deep emotion and a lot of power; this type of voice is not suited for Mozart or the "bel canto," but rather for roles that demand maturity as well as strength. In fact, Watson started singing opera at age thirty-six.

"I stopped singing many times in my twenties," explains Watson, "and then I was granted a scholarship from the California Rotary Foundation to go study in Vienna." All the Rotarians in the

audience felt the pride of having contributed, themselves or their predecessors, to the blossoming of this unique artist.

Watson's debut was in 1998. She has sung numerous times at Bayreuth, the Wagner International Festival, which has been sold out since its creation in 1876 and for which tickets must be bought up to ten years in advance. She is primarily a Wagner interpreter. Brünnhilde is one of her favorite roles. The character is present three times in Wagner's Ring Cycle, which is comprised of different operas, and Watson may be on stage for five hours in a row. She has sung in Bonn, Munich, Hamburg, Florence, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Washington, Seattle and Tokyo.

Watson plans to sing for at least another ten years. Then she will settle down and teach full time. "I have started giving master classes in major cities around the world," she says, "but I travel too much to be able to do more than that right now." The traveling that's part of the management of her career keeps her away from her Californian roots most of the time. "I miss my country, my

family," she says, "I love when I come back here and retrieve the smell of the trees here in Lamorinda."

Talking with such openness to the audience, it is obvious that Watson is not a capricious and inapproachable diva. "It's insecurity that drives some singers to overprotect themselves," she explains, "our world is very difficult, on stage you are naked; off stage, you need to protect yourself. Some fans are great but you can encounter some pretty disturbed personalities as well."

Watson attributes her simplicity to her inner strength. "I owe it to my family," she says, "the way I was raised, my faith in God." She remembers a phrase her father used to tell the kids when they were going out on dates in high school: "Remember who you are and what you represent." Watson still does.

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SPORTS

LAMORINDAS LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

Jontelle Smith and the Gaels Dismantle Fresno State

By Kevin D. Shallat



Erika Ruiz (3)

Photo Tod Fierner

Coming off a three game losing streak to the likes of Cal, Vanderbilt, and Alabama (all major conference teams) and continued play without one of their key rebounders, Maija Lahde, the Saint Mary's women's basketball team got back on track with a big win on Monday, Dec. 10 against the Fresno State Bulldogs. After being down by one at the half, the Gaels were able to take care of business at home and defeat the Bulldogs by a score of 79-68.

Lauren Shaughnessy got the game off to a good start for the Gaels as she made a fancy behind the back dribble and running lay-up to give Saint Mary's a 2-0 lead. However, Tierre Wilson had some fancy moves of her own, as she was able to help the Bulldogs jump out to an early 11-5 lead. Jontelle Smith would single handedly bring the Gaels back into the game with back-to-back jumpers. One of her five 3-point jump shots came from NBA range. As good as the Gaels played in the first

half, they still found themselves trailing the Bulldogs 35-34 at the break.

Smith made the game look easy while scoring a career high, 27 points. It's possible she was inspired by her family and friends who were in attendance Monday night. Smith, a native of nearby Pinole has been scoring in the high twenties with regularity throughout her career. In fact, she scored 26 points in a game against Toledo last December, and averaged 21.4 points in high school. She continued her torrid scoring output and hustle in the second half as well, finishing the game with 27 points, five rebounds, and four steals.

The Gaels received big-time contributions from their other players as well, which helped Saint Mary's break out to a single digit lead for most of the second half. "We were in front of our home crowd, we had to play together, that was the big key to make sure we won this game," Smith said.

Serena Benavente came up with a number of big steals for the Gaels. She would finish with 14 points, four assists, and six steals. Shaughnessy was a solid force at the other guard spot for the Gaels, as she hustled for 11 rebounds in 31 minutes.

Louella Tomlinson continues to put up astoundingly efficient numbers for the Gaels in her early collegiate career. The 6'4" freshman had seven blocks in this game alone. She turned out 13 points, 4 rebounds, 3 assists, and 7 blocks in just over one half of play. Tomlinson was able to limit Fresno State with her impressive defensive play. However with 4:42 seconds left in the game, the Bulldogs were able to cut the Gaels lead to 67-64. Finally, Smith was able to ice the game with a 3-pointer at the 3:40 mark, which ended any real threat of a Bulldog comeback.



With the Ball Serena Benavente (20), Louella Tomlinson (2)

Photo Tod Fierner

Soccer Athlete Caroline Helfrich

Eyes NCS Title Before Heading to LMU

Submitted by Paul Helfrich



Caroline Helfrich

Photo provided

from my Club or ODP teams. I love the rivalries and the spirit of high school games." Campolindo's Women's Varsity Soccer team has been a dominate force in the North Coast Section, winning three of the last four NCS 2A Championships, and the 2007-8 squad is looking to continue that success. Awarded All-League Second Team as a sophomore and All-League First Team as a junior, Caroline adds leadership to a talented squad. "There are many gifted soccer athletes in our Lamorinda community," she said. "Our games against high school rivals Miramonte and Acalanes are always exciting."

In August, Caroline accepted a soccer scholarship offer from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, and will be playing Division 1 soccer for the Loyola Lions beginning next fall.

"I'm looking forward to a great high school season," Helfrich said. "Committing to LMU has taken a lot of the stress out of my senior year. I can really focus on my studies and soccer, knowing that I am already set for university life next year at Loyola."

Playing Division One Soccer for one of the top collegiate soccer programs in the country will be a big step for Helfrich, but she says she is up for the challenge. "We have an athletic tradition in our family. Three of my cousins have won NCAA Championships for UCLA in Water Polo, and my cousin Jack currently plays

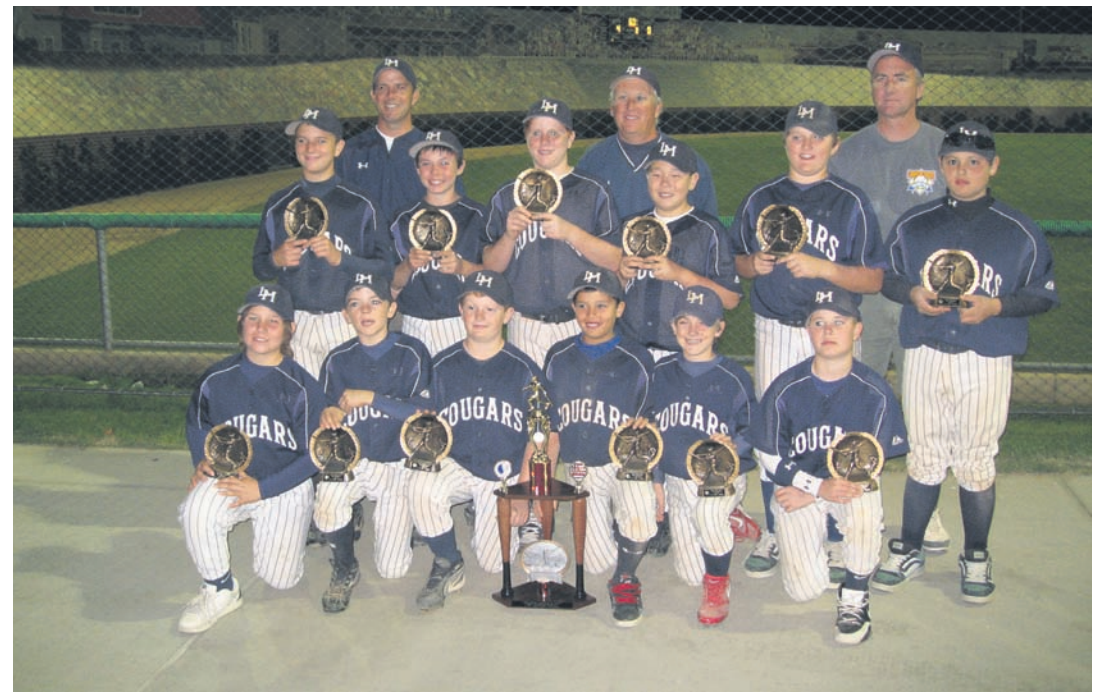
baseball for LMU. I am excited to join them in being a collegiate athlete."

But first things first: Caroline and the Campolindo Cougars have an exciting season ahead.

All our stories are available for download at www.lamorindaweekly.com

Cougars Conquer Southern California

Submitted by Anne McNally



2007 Lamorinda Cougars

Photo provided

The 11-year-old Lamorinda Cougars feasted on some Southern California competition over the Thanksgiving Day weekend. By winning the USSSA Thanksgiving Super NIT in Chino Hills, the Cougars not only captured the season's most prestigious baseball tournament, they also earned a berth to the Elite World Series in Orlando, Fla.

In the championship game of the Super NIT, the Cougars defeated the San Diego Stars 4-3 behind a strong starting pitching performance by Daniel Slominski. Slominski pitched four innings, allowing one run and striking out three for the win. Matthew Bicker earned the save by pitching the final two innings, shutting down a late Stars rally in the bottom of the 6th inning. With two outs and the tying run at second base, a hard grounder was smashed to the left side. However, third baseman Mitchell Tom made a diving stop and then hopped up to throw the runner out at first base by half a step as the Cougars erupted in jubilation on the field.

The Cougars got off to a quick start in the championship game. In the first inning, Bicker doubled, was advanced to third on a grounder by Joe DeMers, and then scored on a passed ball. The Cougars added two more runs in the third inning as DeMers' triple knocked in Tom and then a grounder by Slominski scored DeMers. Then, with two outs

in the fourth inning, Walter Tucker singled, stole second, and scored on DB Vidal's single for what would prove to be the winning run.

The Super NIT Champion Roster included: Eric Benedetti, Matthew Bicker, Joe DeMers, Drew Downing, Remy Fujioka, Conner McNally, Jake Rider, Daniel Slominski, Matthew Tarantino, Mitchell Tom, Walter Tucker and DB Vidal. With his ten RBI's, a batting average of .588, and a slugging percentage of 1.176, DeMers was named the tournament's most valuable player.

Also batting over .400 were Tucker (.500), Benedetti (.455) and Bicker (.438). Tarantino's seven RBI's in a limited role due to his injury trailed only DeMers. Bicker led the team with nine runs scored, followed by DeMers and Tom with seven each and Vidal with six. Downing who pitched in the pool-play rounds didn't allow any earned runs during the entire tournament and Fujioka pitched four strong innings for the semifinal win. Bicker (5) and Tucker (4) led

the team in steals. The defense was led by the brilliant catching of Benedetti and Tom. Consistent and solid middle-infield play was provided by Vidal, Bicker and McNally who were filling in for the injured Tarantino. Game-saving outfield plays were made by Slominski and Rider.

Since the start of the Fall Baseball season, the Cougars have won two of three 12-and-under Tournaments and are six for six for 11 U Tournament, including the State Championship and the Las Vegas Desert Classic. The Cougars, who won the Northern California Fall Championship in October, currently hold title to the most important fall tournaments in both Northern and Southern California. They are currently ranked #2 in the Country behind the North Carolina Angels.

The Cougars will now begin preparations for a trip to the Elite World Series in Orlando in July where the best 24 teams in the country will assemble for a week-long tournament to decide travel baseball's national champion.



Go Gaels!
Upcoming Sports Events at Saint Mary's College

Men's Basketball vs. Furman vs. CS Fullerton, Fri., Dec. 28 at 5 pm
McKeon Pavilion
Men's Basketball vs. Howard

Friday, Dec. 28 at 7:30 p.m.
McKeon Pavilion
Women's Basketball vs. Cal State Fullerton, Sat., Dec. 29 at 2:05 pm
McKeon Pavilion
Women's Basketball vs. Northern Colorado
Sunday, Dec. 30 at 2:05 p.m.
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For information about upcoming season schedules, visit the official Saint Mary's athletics website at www.SMCGaels.com.

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SPORTS

LAMORINDAS LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

Saint Mary's Rides Green Wave with Win at Rainbow Classic

By Kevin D. Shallat (reporting from Honolulu Hawaii)



Patrick Mills (13)

Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's men's basketball bounced back from their first loss of the season, after the Southern Illinois Salukis spoiled the Gael's brief ride in the top 25. The Gaels traveled to

Honolulu, Hawaii where they began a three-day tournament at the Outrigger Rainbow Classic, which started on Thursday, Dec. 20 for the Gaels. Saint Mary's survived a low scoring affair to

beat the Tulane Green Wave by a score of 64-57.

Before the opening of the game, the starting five for both teams, along with the coaches, received leis in a nice pre-game introduction ceremony. A few of the Gaels threw the game-worn leis into the stands where some happy Saint Mary's fans were happy to catch them.

It didn't take Patrick Mills long to record the first two points of the game, as he flew down the lane for an easy layup. Mills didn't quite have his "A" game, but was still quicker to the basket than everybody else, and managed to finish with 23 points. Every time Tulane made a run, Mills would answer with a jumper or drive to the basket to keep the Green Wave at bay. Mills was fortunate to have both his parents fly in from Australia to watch the games. "It was a special game," Mills said. "It's been a while now since I've seen them, and since they've seen me play. I've had to

try my best to give them their money's worth."

Once again the Gaels received good contributions from their bench. Yusef Smith crashed the boards and came up with a couple of crowd-pleasing blocks. Smith finished with eight rebounds and two blocks in only 14 minutes of play.

Both Mills and Tron Smith did a good job of attacking the basket in the first half. They were both able to penetrate the Green Wave defense while protecting the ball on their way to the basket. This type of presence, and physical play helped the Gaels jump out to a 32-21 halftime lead.

In the second half the Gaels were never in jeopardy of losing the game, as they cruised the rest of the way. Omar Samhan had an efficient game, as his minutes were limited due to foul trouble. He would finish with 11 points and five rebounds in 24 minutes. Carlin Hughes gave the Gaels a spark off the bench, as he was a

perfect 4-4 at the free-throw line. Hughes finished with nine points, two rebounds, two assists, and two steals in 22 minutes.

With all of the potential distractions that one might find while playing in Hawaii, the Gaels seem

as focused as ever. "I love (Hawaii), it's everything people said it was going to be like, we're just having fun, but at the same time we have a job to do here," Mills said.

Highlights from Saint Mary's Friday night win over East Tennessee State at Rainbow Classic:

- Randy Bennett sets SMC wins record with 111 coaching victories.
- Yusef Smith matched his career-high with 11 points
- Simpson had his fourth double-double of the season and 11th of his career with 15 points and 12 rebounds
- Simpson's 12 rebounds marks the sixth double-digit rebound game of the season and 15th of his career.
- Lucas Walker had a career high with 12 points

- Patrick Mills had a career-high 8 assists
- Carlin Hughes tied his career-high with five made 3-pointers, going 5-of-9 from beyond the arc.
- With 11 made 3-pointers, Saint Mary's made 10 threes in a game for the fourth time this season.

The Gaels went on to play the championship game of the Rainbow Classic on Saturday, Dec. 22 against the winner of the Ohio/Louisiana-Lafayette game.

Miramonte's Dominant Defense Sinks Newark Memorial

By Steven Johns



Katie Batlin (21)

Photo Gavin Schlissel

The Miramonte Matadors girls' basketball team showed its offensive prowess and defensive dominance in an early preseason game on Thursday, Dec. 20 when the 2-1 Matadors took the court against the 5-3 Newark Memorial Cougars. After a competitive first half, the Matadors came out firing in the second half to win comfortably by a score of 66-42.

The Matadors got off to a good start when senior guard Katie Batlin scored three times to make the score 8-3. The stout Miramonte defense held the Cougars to only 6 points in the first quarter, while the offense was able to put up 12 points.

The Newark Memorial Cougars staged a comeback in the second quarter with five three-pointers. However, Miramonte point guard Ashlee Burns kept the Matadors ahead with 10 points of her own. At the end of the half, Miramonte led a close game by a score of 29-24.

The Matadors came out of the half on fire with a 10-0 run. The Miramonte defense was again dominant, holding the Cougars to only 4 points in the third quarter. Senior guard Katie Evans put all of the momentum on the Matadors' side with two threes and a long jump shot.

The Cougars were no match for the

Matadors in the fourth quarter. Miramonte continued its dominances by starting off the quarter on a 16-4 run. The Cougars scored 10 points late, but did not have enough time to make up their 24 point deficit. The victory was sealed off when sophomore point guard Lauren Kimble drained a long three pointer.

Miramonte was strong outside the arc, making 7 three-point shots, and was able to convert many of its free-throws. Newark Memorial was also hot from the three-point line, making 9 from behind the arc, but the Cougar's poor free-throw shooting diminished any chance they had to win this game.

The Matadors were led by Ashlee Burns, 20 points, and Katie Batlin, 13 points and 1 block. Katie Evans had 13 points while Stephanie Golden scored 10 points and led the defense with 4 blocks.

The Miramonte girls hope to take their momentum from this overpowering win against Newark Memorial though the holidays and into January when they begin their division play. The Matadors will start off their division play against Mt. Diablo and Las Lomas. They will have to continue to have a strong offense and a stout defense to get past 6-0 Northgate a few weeks later.

Salesian 70, Acalanes 66 in Double OT at East Bay Extravaganza

By David Anderson

The Acalanes Dons couldn't finish off the Salesian Pride in a sensational double overtime contest that left the Dons on the short side of a 70-66 resolution Saturday Dec. 15 at Saint Mary's College. The Dons (5-3) held a comfortable lead for most of the game until the Pride (6-1) resurrected midway through the third quarter cutting the lead to five with the fourth quarter still to play.

Salesian came out playing hard in the fourth with spirited play by Justin and Jabari Brown (who combined for 50 of Salesian's 70 points) and was able to tie the game 55-55 on a Justin Brown free-throw to send the game into its first of two overtime periods.

The Dons took the lead in OT and looked to have the Pride beat but weren't able to keep Justin Brown from hitting a desperation 3-pointer from well beyond the arc to tie the game as time expired in overtime.

Leading 69-66 in double overtime Salesian was able to put the game away when Jon Wheat jumped a Brooks Baker pass along the arc with seconds left on the clock. Wheat made it a two possession game by making one of his two free-throw attempts

when the Dons were forced to foul with three seconds remaining.

Joey Anderson (who saw significant playing time last season in the Don's CIF Playoff run) led the way for Acalanes with 23 points. Donovan Christensen added 16 points and Dexter Masland followed with 14 for the Dons.

Acalanes looks to build upon their experience in the preseason as they enter DFAL league play in the coming weeks. The Dons are starting off strong with a 5-3 record after beating El Cerrito, San Rafael and Redwood-Larkspur in the NorCal Tipoff Classic along with Elk Grove in the Chris Vontoure Memorial Classic at De La Salle. The team stumbled during their final two games of the De La Salle Tourney with tough losses to Fairfield (lost in overtime 74-72) and Bellarmine of San Jose. They went on to split their games in the East Bay Extravaganza at Saint Mary's beating Sir Francis Drake and losing to Salesian. Two of the Dons' losses came in tough overtime decisions that could have gone either way.

The Dons are set to begin DFAL play at 5:30 p.m. on Jan. 2 at Northgate High School.

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