

# Lamorinda Community

## Calendar, Notes, News

# Lafayette

Calendar	
City Council	7pm
Community Center, Manzanita Room 500 St Mary's Road Monday, Feb 11	
<b>The Strategy for Downtown Lafayette, Community Workshop:</b> Feb. 12 - 7pm, Lafayette Methodist Church	
Planning Comm.	7pm
Community Center, Manzanita Room 500 St Mary's Road Thursday, Feb 7	
Design Review	7pm
Community Center, Manzanita Room 500 St Mary's Road Tuesday, Feb 12	
Park, Trails, Rec.	7pm
Community Center 500 St Mary's Road Wednesday, Feb 13	
Circulation	7pm
Community Center, Manzanita Room 500 St Mary's Road Monday, Feb 19	
Emergency Prep.	9:15am
City Offices 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Suite 265 Wednesday, Feb 13	
check online: Town of Lafayette: <a href="http://www.ci.lafayette.ca.us">http://www.ci.lafayette.ca.us</a> • all meeting notes • calendar updates Chamber of Commerce: <a href="http://www.lafayettechamber.org">http://www.lafayettechamber.org</a> • local businesses • upcoming events	

*Hungry?*  
**Find The Best Restaurants In Lafayette...**

**www.WeLoveLafayette.com**

When buying or selling a home, and for all of your real estate needs, Discover the Pride of Lafayette with Dana Green. Call today for a complimentary staging and market analysis of your home.




**DANA Green**  
Discover the Pride of Lafayette

(925) 339-1918  
DanaGreen@Rockcliff.com  
www.DanaGreenTeam.com



### Meet City Planner Niroop Srivatsa

By Cathy Tyson



Niroop Srivatsa, Planning & Building Manager Photo Andy Scheck

**“W**e came back from India at midnight on September 10, 2001. We had eight pieces of luggage, the kids were exhausted from the flight, and the customs official looked at us, said the kids looked tired and just let us go,” said Niroop Srivatsa of the start of her second time around as Lafayette’s Planning and Building Manager. “I thought the next day, that wouldn’t have happened. We came back to a different

country. We had to start from scratch; we lived in a hotel for a month. It was rough, but we got over it.” At the time her two children were in ninth and seventh grades. It’s been a bit of a circuitous route for Srivatsa. Born and raised in Madras, in southern India, she has a bachelor’s degree in architecture. Because an aunt and uncle are architects, she says she was naturally drawn to that. “They were

building fairly contemporary houses in India, it was so different from the house in which I grew up. Our ancestral home is over 200 years old; several generations lived in the same home.” Seeing the mix of old and new influenced how she sees city planning. “It made me realize that there isn’t one single form or shape or design that’s correct.” Srivatsa continues, “I moved to city planning after being an architect because it impacts a greater number of people. It deals with the physical form of an entire city rather than just a building.” Coming to the U.S. exposed her to new concepts and ideas, “It opened my entire world. My first job was as a planner for Naperville, Illinois near Chicago. I did the city’s first General Plan, and then came here.” The family spent 10 years there, a big change from the tropical locale of Madras. “As a new immigrant, you never know what your experience is going to be. Naperville was a most welcoming town. We still have friends there, we loved the place. Both cities, although different in size are so similar because Naperville was a big “small town,” and that’s the beauty of Lafayette as well.” ... continued on page 19

### Larry Blodgett, Business Person of the Year

By Cathy Tyson



Karen and Larry Blodgett at the gala dinner Photo Andy Scheck

**“Y**ou’re the man, congratulations!” said longtime pal Greg Woehrle before the official festivities began. That seemed to be the sentiment for the evening as hard-working, all around good guy, third generation owner of Blodgett’s Floor Covering, longtime Chamber of Commerce Board Member and Past President Larry Blodgett was honored as the Marquis Business Person of the Year. If the number of cars lined up for valet parking was any indication, most of Lafayette’s Chamber members were in attendance for the gala dinner at the Lafayette Park Hotel. Mayor Mike Anderson set

the tone for the evening. “The City now faces a major crisis,” he said very seriously. “There’s a great potential for a lot of really bad puns this evening.” He went on to say, “...pulling the rug out from under him. We will ultimately have to give him the floor.” Anderson went on to give a brief State of the City address, concluding with an invitation for everyone to attend the Downtown Strategic Plan Workshop on February 12 at 7:00 at the Methodist Church. “It’s absolutely critical to engage in the process,” insisted Anderson. ... continued on page 13



Good deed, 1/27/08 Allyson Edwards, stellar employee of Toot Sweets Bakery on Mount Diablo Blvd. found and turned in this reporter’s wallet. Everything was still in it, credit cards, drivers license, even cash. Yours truly is eternally grateful, not only for the fabulous cookies, but for your honesty.

Car theft, 1/28/08 A 1990 Honda Accord was parked on Leland Drive and locked. Some stealthy thief came during the night and stole it. License plate number 2TKS621 4-door blue Accord.

Check theft, 1/16/08 The suspect, a resident of Richmond, stole 6 business checks from the owner of Crème de la Crème, a business on Lafayette Circle. The suspect attempted to case one of the checks, but was unsuccessful. The suspect claimed she needed the money for rent.

Burglary, 1/14/08 Two females entered Queen Bee on Lafayette Circle, one spoke to the owner, while the other stole the owner’s wallet from her purse at the other end of the store. They left on foot.

### Handlebar Toys Icon Passes

By Andrea A. Firth

**F**or the past 38 years, Freda Mary Challis helped parents and kids throughout Lamorinda to pick the perfect birthday present, find a favorite toy, and get rolling on a new bike. As the proprietor of Handlebar Toys, one of the oldest retailers in Lafayette, Freda was a well-known fixture in the community. “She loved the community of Lafayette. This was her home,” describes Freda’s daughter Jennifer, an artist now residing in Oakland. Working up until the day she was hospitalized, Freda Challis passed away following a brief illness on January 15th, 2008.

Born in Yorkshire England in 1923, Freda did not like to tell people her age. “She always acted younger than her chronological age,” notes Jennifer—not surprising for someone who spent her life surrounded by kids and toys. After marrying, Freda emigrated to Canada with her young family for an eight year stint and then found her way to Lafayette in the early 1960’s. Freda and her former husband, John Booth, established Handlebar Toys in 1970 in the historic Pioneer Building in downtown Lafayette. Jennifer remembers her mom spending much of her time at work and play at Handlebar Toys. “She loved that store. That was her passion.” In the 1980’s, Handlebar stopped selling bikes, and Freda took sole control of the business focusing on the “tried and true” quality toys that were a trademark of the store. Although she loved the central Lafayette location at 3535 Plaza Way, Freda was a pragmatic businesswoman; and in April of 2007, Handlebar Toys relocated up the road to 3631 Mount Diablo Boulevard in the shopping center with Diablo Foods and Trader Joe’s. The family is currently evaluating options for future plans for the toy store. Also a talented musician, Freda performed in piano in



Freda Mary Challis Photo provided

### Done Deal on Deer Hill

By Cathy Tyson

**D**eer Hill Ranch, a 20-acre property listed at \$2.35 million, was available for sale but after some discussion with the East Bay Regional Park District and some tentative options drawn up by Lafayette’s Parks, Trails and Recreation Director, the owners have found a buyer who will take control of the property as of May 1st of this year. This is a win-win for both Lafayette and Hunter and Ann Holding, the owners. According to the Holdings, “The new owners have the full intention of continuing some of the programs currently offered at Deer

Hill Ranch and potentially offering other opportunities to the community. In evaluating options for our home as well as the non-profit educational programs we created, we believe this one will be a terrific fit and we’re very pleased to be able to take into account both our family needs and the needs and desires of the community.” Because they have an offer on another property, the owners were interested in a quick sale. This matter was taken off last week’s City Council agenda at the last minute due to the sale.

## Cruise The Boulevard

**Coming Soon to Lafayette...  
The Candy Store from Your  
Wildest Childhood Imagination!**

The New Mercantile Bldg.  
3591 Mt. Diablo Blvd.  
299-YUMM




## Premium Flooring Products

**at Great Savings**

*Come in today and let our knowledgeable, friendly staff help you find the perfect solution.*



- Carpet
- Area Rugs & Runners
- Hardwood & Bamboo
- Laminate
- Vinyl
- Amtico
- Plantation Shutters

**LAMORINDA FLOORS & HOME CONCEPTS**

FREE In-Home Consultation, Measurement & Quotes  
**In House Experienced Installers!**  
3344 Mt. Diablo Blvd. • Lafayette • 925.284.4440

## Big Band Dance

Featuring The Roosmoor Big Band

Free Dance Lesson at 7pm



Dance 8-10pm

**Friday February 15**

at The Veterans Memorial Bldg,  
3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Lafayette

**Tickets \$10 per person**

available at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce.  
**Call 284-7404 for reservations**  
[www.lafayettechamber.org](http://www.lafayettechamber.org)