

# Life in LAMORINDA

## Mooo-ving Away!

### Hunter Holding Moves His Cows Out of Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



Black Angus cows, typical in Lamorinda Photo Andy Scheck

After years of ranching in Lafayette, the Holding Farm is headed north in search of greener pastures. Holding is the only local rancher currently selling grass fed beef at the Farmers' Markets. Wanting to grow their

herd, the Holdings decided they would have a better opportunity 280 miles north, in Montague, California.

"Land availability in the Bay Area is limited," explains Holding, "our herd grazes on

leased properties most of the time, it is scattered, hilly and not green enough in summer for the type of raising we are doing." Holding Farm beef is not only grass fed, it is "grass finished," meaning that the cows spend their entire life in the fields, are never sent to feed farms and never get the hormones and antibiotics that are typical of beef cattle ranches.

The cows will board trailers in May to move to the new Holding estate. Their new home comprises 500 acres of irrigated land. The town of Montague is close to Lake Shastina, in an irrigation district. In summer the canals fed by the lake are opened to flood the fields, so they stay green.

Holding owns 50 head at this time, but he and his wife Anne plan to grow the herd to 150-200. His practices will not change; his

cows will continue to roam the fields, and Holding "will continue to have the animals butchered at the same small facility, in the most humane way possible," he says.

Holding promises that the Orinda and Moraga Farmers' Markets will continue to be supplied with his meat, although the familiar faces of Anne and Hunter Holding themselves may be replaced by others at the Holding booth. The larger farm will allow Holding to pursue other distribution channels as well, such as specialty stores, mail order and restaurants.

The Holdings will not forget the Bay Area, saying, "We lived for more than 17 years in Lafayette, we raised both our kids here and we have many friends. We're optimistic. This is a new exciting phase in our lives."

## There's a New Cat in Town

By Chris Lavin



Ginger, adopted by Orinda Books Photo Tod Fierner

For 16 years, Orinda Books – one of the few independent book sellers still operating today – had a store cat. "Fish" was a fixture who lived at the store full-time, purring to old customers and winning over new ones with her mild-mannered feline nature. She died of old age last year.

For months, customers asked, "When are you going to get a new cat?" said Kathy Coad (pronounced Co-add), who besides selling books is the official cat administrator at Orinda Books. But plans were not firm. How, after all, could they ever replace Fish?

Then, one night last fall, as

the bookstore's CD buyer Dennis Forfa made his way through the BART parking lot in Orinda, he heard a tiny mew. Then another mew. Focusing in on the trouble, Forfa scaled a fence to find a tiny, wailing, scrawny kitten with a collar. She was part tortoise-shell, part calico ... and well, part other stuff. No one knows for sure. He cupped her up, tucked her in and took her to the store.

"That's when the search for her home started," said Coad. The staff put signs at the BART station and in nearby neighborhoods. They put an ad in local newspapers trying to find the kitten's owners. They called all

the veterinarians in the area. They had her scanned for a microchip that might have identified her, but no microchip. They sent an e-mail to all of their customers, asking for help to find the kitten's owners.

Nothing happened.

"We tried for more than a month," Coad said. "We really tried everything."

In the meantime, the wayward kitten harbored her own plan, and began winning over customers, old and new. The staff exhausted all their known options. So they did the only thing left to do: They adopted her.

The first mission was to find her a title. She became the meet-greeter, public relations czar, and all-around roaming ambassador from the children's books to the new fiction and elsewhere. The next mission was to find her a name, so another e-mail went out: What did customers think Orinda Books should name the new cat?

"We got more than 300 e-mails back, and at least 150 different names," Coad said. "Because the old cat was Fish, some people thought she should be Fish II, or some variation of that. But nothing really resonated." Lots of customers voted for Ginger, Coad said, and lots

voted for Virginia, after the writer Virginia Wolfe. Ginger – or Ginga' for Wolfe fans – stuck.

Now, Ginger never leaves the store. Her litter box is upstairs, and on the rare day that the store is closed, a staff member comes in to feed her. Ginger's current favorite activity seems to be spending much of her day on a rolling office chair with her good friend Gunnar, bookseller Sandy Barnett's terrier, attached to it with his leash. If he feels like going somewhere he pulls her along. If she doesn't feel like going anywhere, she bats him with her paw from above to tell him to knock it off.

"They're great together," said Coad. "And the customers love her."

Staff members taped signs to the store's door, both inside and out, warning customers not to let the cat out. So far, Ginger has remained put, without a single escape or whim for the great wild world of the Bank of America parking lot. After all, she has seen the BART parking lot, and she's not stupid. She now has all her shots and was recently spayed.

"We like to say that she's the only employee who has health insurance," Coad said, with a smile, and a hug to the policy recipient.

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## Programs in Orinda Offer Teens Something To Do

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OTAC is essentially "a teen run program" according to Hudson. The teens involved create the ideas for the programs that are available. The ideas that the participants come up with are often times community service oriented, although these activities are balanced with activities designed to give teens an outlet.

"In December we worked with the food bank. In January we started a program with yoga and relaxation at Mira-

monte High School and in February we held a blood drive here at the Community Center" explains Hudson. Activities such as tutoring Orinda youth and working with Orinda seniors are scheduled to take place in the next couple of months. Currently, OTAC is working to establish a teen movie night that will hopefully begin this summer, and a possible game day with Orinda seniors.

OTAC also offers a significant number of ski and

snowboarding trips throughout the winter. These trips run to various Tahoe area resorts via bus and occur roughly on a weekly basis through April 19th. Upcoming trips are scheduled for March 8th, 15th, 22nd, 23rd, 27th and 29th.

For more information on the Orinda Teen Advisory Council call (925) 253- 4206. The Council meets the first Monday of each month at 4pm at the Orinda Community Center.

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