

Acalanes

Adult Education Center—The Place to Keep Learning

By Andrea A. Firth



Instructor Everett Makinen helps students in computer class at the Acalanes Adult Education Center Photo Andrea A. Firth

So you graduated from high school (possibly quite a long time ago) and you also finished an undergraduate degree (also a long time ago), possibly you even obtained a Masters and Doctorate degrees. Not done yet? Maybe you are looking for something completely different or little more fun this time around like learning how to dance the hula, sing in a women's Barbershop Chorus, trace your family roots, or create a website. These courses and many more are available for adult learners through the Acalanes Adult Education Center, which is currently accepting registrations for the Spring Quarter that starts on April 7th.

"The commitment to life-long learning is something we strongly support," states Laura Canciamilla, the Director of Acalanes Adult Education. "The brain acts like a muscle," she explains. "You have to keep it exercised or it deteriorates." And like the many adults in Lamorinda who run, walk, and bike the trails to keep their bod-

ies in shape, many are committed to keeping their brains fit as well. "Each year we have over 8,000 adult students take classes through our Center," notes Canciamilla.

Headquartered at the Del Valle Campus on Tice Valley Boulevard in Walnut Creek with several cooperative campuses in Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda, the Acalanes Adult Education Center serves Lamorinda and the surrounding area. The courses cover a range of subject matter including citizenship preparation, fine arts, fitness, parenting, and estate planning.

"We have a really strong world language program," states Cancimilla. "Research [with seniors] shows that keeping the mind active and engaged helps offset the memory loss that often comes with age," she adds. "Learning a language is one of the best things for [older] adults to do." Offering several classes in English as a second language, the Center's language program also includes classes in French, Italian, Spanish, German, Mandarin, Japan-

ese, and Arabic.

"In addition, Tuesdays throughout the Spring we offer a lecture series in cooperation with the Diablo International Resource Center (DIRC)," states Canciamilla. "The DIRC was established following the passage of Proposition 13 to provide resources to supplement the social studies curriculums," she explains. The program has evolved to include this lecture series that will cover topics such as immigration, the global economy, and energy policy.

"Another exciting, new course on the Spring schedule is Film Appreciation," notes Canciamilla. Offered Monday evenings from 6:00 to 9:00 pm, participants will view and analyze both early and modern films as each week focuses on a specific aspect of the film process, e.g. lighting or sound. The films will be watched on a large, theater-like screen, and of course, popcorn will be served.