

# Life in LAMORINDA

## Two Women Making a Difference

By Cathy Tyson



From left, Caroline Lovell and Mary Tuchscherer Photo Cathy Tyson

They met through the School of Holistic Studies at John F. Kennedy University, connecting through their use of story via the written word for Mary Tuchscherer and photographs for Caroline Lovell. "I think we are perfect examples of women over a certain age finding our passions and having a lot of energy at this stage of our lives," said Tuchscherer.

Tuchscherer, an Adjunct Faculty member at JFK, founded

Voice Flame Writers in 2003 to support and instruct women to value their experience through legacy and story. She just finished teaching a writing retreat for women in Lafayette, entitled Your Story: Your Legacy. "If you write about a loss or a fear and you've held it so tight, writing allows for the space to really think about it," she reflected. The goal of her workshop is self-exploration to open and heal the heart and celebrate the wisdom

of one's life experience.

Travelling through Malawi with friend and fellow JFK faculty member Masankho Banda in 2007, Tuchscherer felt a distinct chemistry with the local women. "As it turned out, my second day there a group of women and I found an immediate connection through books - Eat, Pray, Love, Three Cups of Tea. They have access to amazon.com."

After finding out that there were no books published by Malawian women, she realized, "it was one of those moment in life where I just knew that I was called to do this, that I could serve."

In 2009 Tuchscherer and Lovell are going back Malawi to host writers' workshops and write a book encapsulating their experiences with Lovell providing the photographs, and produce a video documentary. "I see groups of women in Malawi getting together to tell their stories for future generations," said Tuchscherer. Lovell has a vision for the finished photographs as part of a multi-media exhibit, "large portraits of the storytellers; within the images are em-

bedded parts of their stories, along with a button to hear their voices, and take home story cards for viewers." She feels that stories need to be released back into the world again where they have the possibility of affecting new people.

"I want to invite the people of Lamorinda to get involved - fundraising, grant writing, through workshops here. We are sponsoring a book drive to raise books to ship to Malawi. What we want to do is invite people to donate books and particularly because this is all about women, to bring in a book by their favorite female author, so that we can expose the women of Malawi to other cultures and what's possible," said Tuchscherer.

Book donations can be dropped off at Orinda Books or Canetti's Book Shop, also in Orinda, as well as the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. The next local writers' workshop will be held on July 12 in Lafayette, contact Mary Tuchscherer at www.voiceflamewriters.com for more information.

## Lamorinda AAUW Branch Celebrates and Renews

By Sophie Braccini



AAUW May luncheon at the Orinda Country Club Photo Sophie Braccini

As the Lamorinda branch of the American Association of University Women got together to celebrate Maryann Zivic, the Distinguished Woman of the Year, members were reminded of the important role their association has played in the life of many

young women around the world, and here in Lamorinda, thanks to the tireless efforts of volunteers and the generous donations of members.

Marie Bonilla was re-elected President of the branch. An engineer by training, the

young woman likes to present figure-based facts. A series of mysterious figures were listed on the back of the agenda. 128 + 52 to represent the 128 years AAUW has been advancing equity for women and girls, and 52 years for the Lamorinda branch. 201 + 21 = 3%, is the increase in branch membership this year. 1885 to 2008, the years the organization has sponsored 100 research programs.

Bonilla reminded the audience that the first research the association conducted was intended to demonstrate that education doesn't hurt women's health. "We have come a long way since then," said Bonilla, "but plenty is still to be done." The association acts all over the world and this year granted 257 young women \$4,000,000 for their education.

Closer to home, 795 Lamorinda middle schools girls have participated in the Sister to Sister program, while 280 high school students were trained to mentor them.

The second part of the luncheon held in the Orinda Country Club was a very emotional celebration of Maryann Zivic. Most of her 6 children, some of her grand-children and great grand-children were present. Zivic has had a life long involvement with volunteer groups, noticeably with AAUW and Saint Perpetua Church in Lafayette. As friends and family succeeded each other to recount their life with Zivic, she emerged as an extraordinarily strong, brilliant and fun woman, whose faith and sense of service to the community have guided her all her life.

## Moraga Women's Society 40 years dedicated to community service... and fun!

By Sophie Braccini



Moraga women celebrate 40 years of community service Photo Sophie Braccini

The energy level of the Moraga Women's Society has not diminished over their forty years of existence. The association assembled on May 18th to celebrate 40 years of community service and plan for the 40 years to come. "Our town wants to officially recognize service groups like yours," said Mayor Lynda Deschambault, as she presented a Town Proclamation to the assembly, "I am pleased to honor this group, the first women's service society founded in Moraga."

"We opened our first bank account in 1968 with \$54," remembers past treasurer Jean Farnsworth, "membership was \$3 and members had to be active or they'd be kicked out." The club first operated in a town that was unincorporated, that had no library or parks and recreation department. The first actions and fundraisers aimed at providing after-school care, creating a charter library and developing summer programs for children.

Listening to Sue Holmes retrace the history of the group was like a trip back in time when Moraga argued against a bus service to go to BART. "We had many ways for raising funds," remembered Holmes, "one of our most popular was the Honorary Mayors race.

Candidates created events to raise money for the group and the one who raised the most was proclaimed 'Honorary Mayor.'" Holmes took the assembly back to a time when there was a party every night in Moraga. "Then we incorporated and all that fun ended," added Holmes.

Now the main fundraiser for the group is the Christmas Home Tour that raised more than \$16,000 in 2007, and the inflatable bouncers for children at the annual Pear Festival. All that money is redistributed to local institutions. Over the years, the Society has donated more than \$300,000. The biggest recipient is Moraga Parks and Recreation, which has received more than \$80,000, closely followed by the Moraga School District with almost \$80,000., then the Moraga Library, the Acalanes High School District and the Senior Helpline, among others.

"In the 70's when you turned thirty-six you were kicked out of the Moraga Juniors and joined the Women Society," remembers outgoing president Colleen Lund. That's not the case anymore and the group has had difficulty attracting younger members. This will be one of the challenges of new President Roberta Klapproth.

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