

Life in LAMORINDA

As Gas Prices Change, So Do Some Lamorinda Residents' Daily Lives

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"A lot of my business is the marketing of homes owned by relocation companies, so I need to make property inspections of the vacant homes at least a couple of times a week to make sure that they are secure, that maintenance is being taken care of, etc.," he says. "Instead of visiting one property one day and another the next, I now make a lap of all of the properties to avoid driving out to Oakley and back to Moraga and then over to Dublin, for example."

Bassett has also noticed a marked increase in carpooling in his industry.

"Real estate agents used to go out on their own or with another agent to look at the homes on Tuesdays," Bassett says. "Now when a car drives up to a broker open house we often see five people get out to tour the listing; we are also seeing fewer agents from other areas coming over to Lamorinda on tour. They are staying closer to their offices."

One Orinda mom, who asked not to be named, uses her husband's car on the weekends, since gas is paid for by his company. But she is not over-doing it.

"Now I call first before going to Target to see if they have what I need, and I will walk to the grocery store," she says. "Gas prices have totally affected us. There were times when a friend and I would be going somewhere, and I'd quickly say 'I'll drive!' Now, we really talk about it."

Lafayette resident Marti Kohen has her kids ride their razors, skateboards, or bikes to the local pool for swim practice and for work as lifeguards. "There are definitely more carpools and more organized

errand running," she says. Another Moraga mother, who owns an SUV, asked for a bike rack for her birthday and now drives her kids one way. They bike themselves home.

Since November 2007, Americans have been driving less, according to the Federal Highway Administration



good news for reducing greenhouse gas emissions; bad news for the Highway Trust Fund, which relies on revenues from the federal gasoline excise tax, it says.

Other bad news may come in the form of a reduction in volunteer drivers who help organizations like Meals on Wheels or Seniors Around Town (SAT) – a program exclusively for Orinda seniors who are no longer able to drive and who may not qualify for the County Connection LINK system.

Fortunately, Orinda Association president Kate Wiley says the generosity of her volunteer SAT drivers hasn't changed. The organization, however, has changed the type of award given to their Volunteer Driver of the Year. "In the past the volunteer might have received flowers," she says, "but now thanks to donations from our community, as a gift to that person we give them gas cards."

Others are seeing more of their neighbors working from home. Bassett says he has seen some "marginally producing"

agents leave the business altogether "due to lack of revenue and the cost of doing business (i.e. cost of gas)."

Joanne Tan, however, sees a silver lining to the high gas prices. Tan believes this is a wake-up call to expand the use of public transportation (which she reminds us will benefit our planet's health), and hopes we can gradually reducing the use of low occupancy vehicles.

Until then, look for more hybrids on Lamorinda roads. At least two more joined the ranks this past year: Bassett's Honda Civic Hybrid and the Tan's Prius.

Gas Saving Tips

Last year, when a gallon of gas cost a measly \$2.75, Joanne Tan, who is the leader for the Holy Planet Task Force and who won a Lafayette Green Award, was already promoting gas-saving tips. These tips were originally intended for reducing CO2 emission and saving the planet from global warming, but now help Tan and her family reduce fuel consumption as well.

- Instead of using AC, roll down all vehicle windows by two inches to allow fresh air to circulate. (Rolling windows all the way down creates drag that makes the vehicle burn more fuel.)

- Combine chores.
- Purchase a hybrid car.
- Other small steps: check tire pressure regularly, avoid driving with heavy loads in the vehicle, avoid idling more than a minute, and drive at a moderate speed without frequent change of speed or breaking, when possible.

(source: "Live Green To Do List", Joanne Tan, Holy Planet Task Force)

Cycling Across the US-71 year-old Bob Frick of Lafayette

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Aiming to cover an average of 55 to 65 miles a day with the occasional day off for rest and good behavior, Bob plans to complete the 3,300 mile trek in about two months. By his side, as she has been for most of his adventures, will be Barbara who will drive their Prius for most of the trip and join Bob on her bike for some of the route.

"I am the keeper of the golden ice pick," states Barbara. Although Bob has gotten the green light for the bike trip from his both his orthopedic surgeon and general physician, both advised that Barbara should be given the authority to determine if Bob should stop biking at any time during the trip. "He'll be riding in temperatures over 100F with humidity, and we don't really have that in Northern California," explains Barbara.

Although he heat and humidity are a concern, Bob remains undaunted. The fact that he has not heard of anyone else in their seventies who has attempted the cross-country ride, let alone completed it,

does not seem to phase him either—just the opposite, it seems to please him. Bob expects to head out on August 1st and be done by October 1st. Donations can be

made by going to first-giving.com/cycleofhope; with questions contact Bob at kesrobfrick@comcast.net.

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