

Life in LAMORINDA

Multiculturalism Thrives in Lamorinda

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Contra Costa Chinese School hosted a barbecue picnic at the Moraga Commons Photo Andy Scheck

The Contra Costa Chinese School, which was founded by a small group of Chinese parents who wanted to provide Chinese language instruction to their American-born children, hosted a barbecue picnic last July at the Moraga Commons.

"It's great when both children and parents naturally get to socialize with children and parents who share the same cultural background in these language schools," Tan says.

When Ute Kelley came to Moraga in 1981 with her two daughters, she started bowling in the Newcomers Bowling League and met some German friends there. Eight years ago, she joined a group called the Accent Club, where women from different countries who speak different languages meet at each other's homes for pastries and coffee.

"The club has Germans, French, and others from other countries," Kelley says. "They don't all speak my native language, so if someone who was French was there we'd speak English. If everyone there was German, we would all

speak German because it was so easy."

Kelley sees herself as having two home countries - America and Germany. She strives to keep up her childhood traditions and pass them along to her children and grandchildren.

Tan says knowing one's cultural heritage engenders a feeling of 'being rooted', and is fundamental to earning a sense of self-respect. "Knowing other cultures makes one have respect for others," she added.

A few years ago, Amoroma restaurant owner Michele Lavecchia coordinated Italian Nights at the Rheem Theater with Saint Mary's Italian Professor Maria Grazia De Angelis as a way to foster Italian culture in Moraga. The evenings began with antipasti and wine prior to the showing of internationally acclaimed Italian films.

Moraga resident Linda Foley liked the idea of these movies at Rheem. Originally from Bavaria, she likes to get together with a couple of European friends to watch German movies. "We try to over-

look the subtitles - or we read the subtitles, disagreeing at times with the translation," Foley says. "We play German Scrabble, listen to German music, and do German puzzles."

Today, you can find more foreign films at local video stores, yoga studios are commonplace, residents can enjoy the French game of petanque at new courts near the Lafayette Community Center, and the Moraga Bocce Ball Club's membership has reached capacity at the Moraga Commons.

Cultural diversity and acceptance has even reached the school yard. Next fall, karate will be offered as an afterschool program for Lamorinda middle school students, and heritage days are a regular celebration at local elementary schools.

As a cub scout den leader, Tan invited her cub scouts' parents, who were from all different cultural backgrounds (Korean, Dutch, Maltese, Chinese, and Russian) to share cultural artifacts, food, and clothing, and share with the den each family's unique heritage stories.

Bocce Ball Tournament on July 4th

The Moraga Bocce Ball Club will have a 4th of July bocce ball tournament at the Moraga Commons consisting of 12 teams starting at 10 a.m. on a first-come basis. Sign-up sheets are available on the courts which are open between 6 and 8 p.m. Finalists will play each other at 1 p.m. until a winner is announced. Each team needs four players, and all teams must be registered by June 30.

"I reminded [the scouts] that everyone in America comes from somewhere else," she says. "Even the longest residents - the American Indians - came from Mongolia when they crossed the frozen sea linking Siberia and Alaska."

A melting pot of cultures, customs, lifestyles, and heritages, Tan thinks it's wonderful that we don't have to travel to all corners of the world to learn about different cultures.

"Only in America," she says.

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Chevalier Restaurant to Take Over Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini

Chevalier means knight in French. A young French chef, Philippe Chevalier, who will soon open a French Restaurant at 960 Moraga Road in Lafayette, certainly has the drive and the adventurous spirit his name carries. "This country is good to those who are daring," says Chevalier with a typical French accent. "I have proven myself in the East Bay and San Francisco as an Executive chef, it is now time that I start my own business."

The chef, now in his early 40's, came to the United States seven years ago to fulfill a childhood dream. He arrived in Danville in 2002 to take charge of Salamander and in 2003 was recognized as "Best Chef" in Diablo Magazine's Best of the Bay Area restaurants. His career continued in San Francisco and in 2004, the SF Examiner nominated "Chez Papa," where he was Executive Chef, San Francisco's Best French/European Restaurant.

His new restaurant will follow in the footsteps of the recipes that got him top awards in Danville and San Francisco. The restaurant's offering will be high-end, no compromise on the quality of the products, with friendly service and live music.

Chevalier already knows where to find local fresh meats and vegetable to create the Provence/Paris seasonal menu he is preparing. "Of course everything will be made from scratch," he promises, "you will see bouillabaisse on the menu (fish stew from Marseilles), aioli (a garlic and olive oil based sauce from Provence that accompanies vegetables and fish, among other possibilities), about 70% of the menu will be from the South of France, a light cuisine using grape seed and olive oils, the rest will be more Northern and Central French dishes." Chevalier doesn't want to say too much yet; he has a personal touch and likes to surprise his customers with creative salty and sweet inventions.

Chevalier wanted to go back to the East Bay to start his own business. He chose Lafayette for the small town feel that he longs for from his native Luçon in the Vendée region in France. "I've always liked this area since I worked in Danville," says Chevalier, "people here are worldly, sophisticated and appreciate high quality products and services." To the question regarding the already large number of restaurants in Lafayette, Chevalier smiles

gently, "Lafayette already offers an interesting range of foods, it was just missing a touch of Provence, a shade of lavender and romantic French evenings to obtain a perfect picture." Chevalier is counting on the charming garden of his restaurant to create the atmosphere he loves. He believes that the full bar license is a great asset, he will serve a full range of appetizers for those interested in a drink and lively conversation late in the night.

"We are opening the first week of July, in the evening only," says the Chef, "starting with an early-bird special from 5 to 6 p.m. with a \$32 prix fixe menu." Chevalier is recruiting local musicians to launch his dinner with live jazz on the terrace, most probably on Wednesday evenings. "There are excellent musicians around here, like 'Duo Gadjo,' a French-American couple living in Moraga, who play some great jazz and modern French music," he says.

The young entrepreneur definitely wants to become part of the Lamorinda scene. He and his wife Gretchen have settled in Orinda and are expecting their first child in early August.

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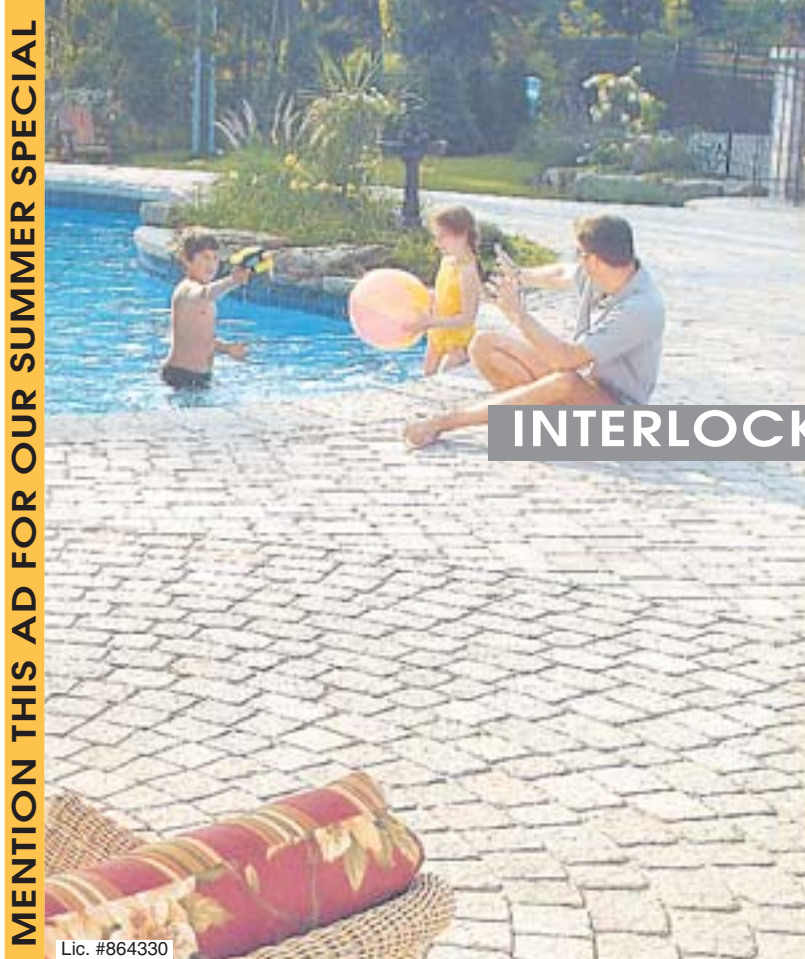
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