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# Lamorinda Schools

Lafayette Elementary • Los Perales • Miramonte • Orinda Academy Orinda Intermediate • Saklan Valley School • Sleepy Hollow Springhill • Stanley Middle • St. Perpetua School • Wagner Ranch

## Student Organizes Fundraiser for Five Year Old

By Sophie Braccini



Jane Coggins, bridesmaid at her aunt's wedding

Photo courtesy of the Coggins family

Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) is a term applied to a number of different disorders, all having in common a genetic cause and the manifestation of weakness due to loss of the motor neurons of the spinal cord and brainstem. About 1 in 40 people in this country carry the gene; little Jane Coggins was diagnosed with SMA at 11 months. She has extremely weak muscles; she is tube fed, and wheelchair-bound. She is extremely smart, as her speech therapist, Carol Lettko, immediately noticed. The Lafayette mother told Jane's story to her own daughter Kelsey, who was inspired to raise money to help the Coggins family purchase the equipment Jane

needs but that medical insurance will not cover.

"When my mother told me about Jane I felt I wanted to do something," said Kelsey, a junior at Miramonte High School. So she and her sister Krista embarked in a campaign to raise her peers' interest and get them involved. "I asked local teens and adults to share their artistic talents and donate their works of art," explained Kelsey, "the idea was to organize a fair with all the proceeds going to Jane. We also have local teen musicians from Miramonte that will play live music."

Kelsey's friends from Campolindo and Miramonte are helping out, some donating their creations,

some baking, others disseminating information about Jane. The fundraiser will be a craft fair held at the Lettko residence in Lafayette on July 25th from 3-7 p.m. Pottery donated by the Contra Costa Community College will be on sale as well as paintings and wood carving from art students. Other local artists have donated jewelry, photography work, baked goods, plants and many other items. Some donations will be part of a silent auction, including a stay in a condo in Cabo San Lucas and front row tickets to a Shark's game.

Lettko says she would like "to be able to get Jane a page turner because she loves to read, games for her computer, switch operated toys, dues for her acupuncturist, Chinese medicine doctor appointments and medicines, and co-pays for a much needed new manual wheelchair seating system, among other needs." Jane lives with her mother and grandparents in Walnut Creek.

For more information about the event, contact the Lettko family at CJL164@aol.com or klettko@yahoo.com. If artists want to donate art pieces for the auction they should contact Kelsey. The family of the little girl has created a fund to collect donations, those wishing to donate may do so one of two ways: Checks can be made out to Martha Lodge (Jane's grandmother) (FOB) For the Benefit of Jane Coggins, Account #1313 and mailed to US Bank, 3498 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Lafayette, CA 94549, or donate online by going to Jane's website at www.janecoggins.com.

## Family Focus

### How to Help Your Child Develop a Healthy Body Image (Part 2)

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

The good news is that you are probably the proud, loving parents of wonderful children. The difficult news is that you are also daily role-models for these children. It's amazing what children choose to notice about their parents – sometimes, unfortunately for us, just the moments we would like to forget!

● In order to help your child develop a positive body image, she must see that you regard your own body in a positive way. If you stand in front of the mirror and critique your appearance or complain about your stomach, your child will learn to look at herself critically as well. If you are not satisfied with your body, a common phenomenon in our society, perhaps you can get some counseling to help. At the very least, it is important to keep your negative thoughts and comments private and to try to be a model of self-acceptance for your children.

● Family gene pools influence body build, height, and weight distribution. Help your child understand that her body type is inherited just like her eye color, and that features can only be altered to a certain extent. For example, if her genetic make-up includes a tendency to carry weight in the thighs, help her to learn to accept this.

● Of course, we also want to model exercise as an excellent way to improve our body image. It increases endorphins and metabolism, while it also helps us appreciate our body and how it functions and performs. If parents have a sedentary lifestyle, often children will adapt to this and won't incorporate regular exercise into their lives.

● Be sure that you have an appropriate relationship with food, or seek outside help before it affects your children. I worked with an anorexic teenager whose mother never sat down for meals with the family. Her children rarely saw her eat, and her daughter unconsciously began to mirror her behavior. It is also impor-

tant to avoid taking extreme approaches with food, such as prohibiting sugar. You want to be able to model healthy and flexible eating for your children.

● Needless to say, joking or teasing about any feature of your child's appearance can have a negative impact. One client's father teasingly called her "chubby" when she was nine years old, and this had a lasting effect on the way she viewed her body.

● One last suggestion is crucial, especially with society's emphasis on external appearances and possessions. Parents need to counteract harmful messages children receive from the media and other sources by downplaying interest in the appearance and cost of houses, cars, jewelry, and clothes. It is essential that you make it a point to not scrutinize your child's appearance, your own appearance, or that of others. Avoid commenting on people's appearance in general. Children and teens have said that hearing their parents' remarks about others' bodies or physical attributes makes them question what their parents really think about theirs.

If a child is exceptionally attractive, it is especially important not to fuss over or emphasize her appearance. You may need to intercede so that family and friends avoid doing this as well. Instead, place emphasis on her special qualities, personality and skills, so that she learns those are far more important than one's physical appearance.

If you see your child beginning to struggle with body image issues, consult with a professional early. It is always easier to prevent problems than to treat them once they have developed.

**Margie Ryerson, MFT**, is a marriage and family therapist in Orinda and Walnut Creek. Contact her at 925-376-9323 or www.margieryersson.com

## Lafayette School District

### Accepts Resignation of Superintendent

By Jean Follmer

According to the Lafayette School District, "Dr. Frank Tom has announced that he is resigning as superintendent for personal reasons. At its regular meeting on June 24, the Governing Board regretfully accepted his resignation effective July 1." Lafayette School District Governing Board President Stephenie Teichman said Dr. Tom "disclosed his reasons for resigning to the Board confidentially at the time of his resignation." After serving as Superintendent for one year, Dr. Tom addressed Lafayette parents in a letter dated June 24 saying "It has been a pleasure meeting many of you throughout the year, and it has been an honor for me to be associated with parents who care deeply about their children's education and welfare."

After accepting Dr. Tom's resignation, "the Lafayette School District Governing Board met in

closed session this week for the purpose of developing a process for the superintendent search. In consultation with Hazard Young Attea (HYA) search consultant firm, the Governing Board has developed a process for the superintendent search. The contract with HYA (which is still active from the terms from the previous search) will allow the District to avoid the payment of consulting fees, other than the reimbursement of expenses incurred on the Board's behalf." After July 1, applicants may apply for the position at www.hyasupersearches.com. The Governing Board hopes to begin interviewing candidates by the end of July. President Teichman said "Director of Student Services Dana Sassone will serve as Acting Superintendent until the end of the search process." For updates, please visit the District's website at www.lafsd.k12.ca.us.

As previously reported, Governing Board member David Stromberg announced his required resignation due to his move to unincorporated Lafayette. President Teichman said "we will need to fill the 2 years remaining on his 4 year term." According to the District website, "there will be two regular 4-year positions expiring and one short term 2-year position, due to the vacancy caused by Mr. Stromberg's resignation." Interested applicants should contact the Contra Costa County Election Department. The District will be holding an informational meeting prior to the filing deadline (August 8) for all interested candidates. Contact Jennifer Sabroe at the Lafayette School District Office (phone 925-299-3502 or email jsabroe@lafsd.k12.ca.us) to be notified of the date and time of the informational meeting.

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## Four Lamorinda Students Recognized as California Arts Scholars

Submitted by Robin Moore

Devin Abbott of Lafayette, Brittany Padon of Moraga, and Annelise Gelman and Matthew Loudon, both of Orinda, are among sixteen Contra Costa County students who have been recognized as "California Arts Scholars" by the state's InnerSpark program. These students will participate in an intensive pre-professional training program at the California State Summer School for the Arts to be held at the campus of the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia this summer.

InnerSpark—California State Summer School for the Arts—is a rigorous, pre-professional, month-long training program in the visual and performing arts, creative writing, animation and film for talented artists of high school age. The school was created by the California Legislature in the mid-1980s in response to increasing competition from other states on the burgeoning arts and entertainment industry. At that time, film, television, and recording complexes, which had traditionally

wish to study and practice the arts or to pursue careers in the major performing arts companies and the commercial and fine arts institutions in California. This unique public-private partnership is now embarking on its 21st summer of operation; the school has trained more than 9,500 students.

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