

Published September 17, 2008

## Local Rotary Clubs Give Dictionaries to Lamorinda 3rd Graders

By Jean Follmer



Tamara Raeth and Steve Hanna await their cue to deliver dictionaries to Lafayette Elementary 3rd graders. Tamara's son, Stefan, is a 3rd grader there and Steve's children are alumni Photo Tom Black

Each year, the Rotary Clubs in Lamorinda give dictionaries to our 3rd grade students. Lafayette students receive their dictionaries from members of both the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club and the Lafayette Rotary Club. Moraga students are given dictionaries by the Moraga Rotary Club and the Orinda Rotary Club gives them to all Orinda 3rd graders. The Moraga Rotary Club also gives dictionaries to the 3rd graders in Canyon. All Lamorinda 3rd graders receive dictionaries at both private and public schools. At a recent Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary meeting, George Chaffey said some folks have asked why dictionaries need to be distributed to students in such affluent communities. "This is a Rotarian to child (effort). We don't try to distinguish between rich or poor or public and private," said Chaffey. "Part of it is to make Lamorinda better for everybody. Part of it is to make all of the children in Lamorinda better future leaders," continued Chaffey. Steve Ware confirmed Chaffey's statement by saying, "It's all about the kids...they're the future." Both of Ware's young daughters are honorary members of the Sunrise club. The dictionary program began in 1998 when George Chaffey was the District 5160 Governor. They decided they wanted to participate in a district-wide effort and asked District 5160 rotary members for suggestions. The dictionary idea came from a member in a small club in Oregon who had seen a 20/20 report on a crossing guard handing out small dictionaries to students. In that first year, Chaffey said 700 district members gathered in Concord to receive and label three truckloads worth of dictionaries. Chaffey said "There were Rotarians from every club in the district. It was a big working party." They distributed 30,000 dictionaries the first year. Chaffey said the district received over 15,000 "thank you" notes from teachers and students. Since then, the dictionary program has been handled at the local level and has spread to many rotary clubs across the country. The distribution efforts often extend beyond the membership. In Lafayette, Tamara Raeth is the wife of Lamorinda Sunrise member Thomas Raeth. The Raeths were in charge of the Lafayette dictionary program this year and held the work party at their home. "Two dozen people went to their (the Raeth's) house for a BBQ. We put name plates in each of the dictionaries. We also affixed a cover letter explaining to the parents what we're doing and why," said Sunrise Rotarian Tom Black. Current Lamorinda Sunrise President Pat Flaherty said Tamara Raeth "has been coordinating this for months." "This year we have the biggest 3rd grade ever. The schools are at capacity. I have a 3rd grader who's been waiting to get this," said Raeth. 448 Lafayette 3rd graders received dictionaries this year. Moraga Rotary Club member Debbie Roessler said their club will distribute dictionaries later this

fall. Roessler said they engage the students when they deliver the dictionaries and have them look up words like "truth" and "fair" to see how many different meanings there are. Roessler said the dictionary program "has been well received in Moraga." Orinda Rotary Club member Gail Woznak said they will be delivering dictionaries on September 24. "Every year the dictionaries are welcomed by both the teachers and students in Orinda. The letters we get are just amazing. The kids are so cute and they write these wonderful letters using the words in the dictionary. We've been doing this for a number of years in Orinda and it's one of our favorite projects," said Woznak. For more information on the dictionary program, visit [www.rotary5160.org/programs/dictionary.php](http://www.rotary5160.org/programs/dictionary.php)



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