

SCHOOL CALENDAR

School Governing Board Meetings

Acalanes Union

High School District
Board Room AUHSD Office
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette
Wednesday, Oct. 15 at 7:30 pm
Wednesday, Oct. 29 at 7:30 pm
- Special Session

Lafayette School District

LAFSD Office
3477 School Street, Lafayette
Monday, Nov. 17 at 7:00 pm

Orinda Union School District

OUSD Office
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda
Monday, Nov. 3 at 4:00 pm

Moraga School District

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga

Not to be missed - Teens & Parents

Time Management & Organization - for Families with Middle Schoolers Thursday, October 16, 2008, noon - 1:30pm, school library Walnut Creek Intermediate School, 2425 Walnut Blvd, Walnut Creek, CA 94597 no fee, register on-line at <http://www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/adulted/html/peelementarymiddleschool.htm> Questions & Comments? Vera Babor at vbabor@acalanes.k12.ca.us.

How to Help Your Middle School Daughter Build a Firm Foundation for Relationships. Please join us for a Parent Emergency Response Training on Wednesday, October 22nd 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm at Orinda Intermediate School. (See story page 17)

Acalanes High School Parents Club presents: Your Teen and the Law: What Every Parent Should Know. Mary P. Carey, juvenile defense attorney,

will present a lively, informative view of current laws that affect our teens including: Drinking and Driving, Drugs, Parties, Consensual Sex, and more....Wednesday, Oct 29th, 7:00 pm, Acalanes High School Theatre, 1200 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette, CA

The Moraga Asian American Club hosts Michael F. Dang, Associate Director, Undergraduate Admissions at UC Davis, "Presenting the Total Student in the UC Admission Application Process". Learn how to build your statement to include essential elements to distinguish yourself from others in the application process. This is a unique opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the complex UC admissions process! There will be time reserved for questions from students and parents following the presentation. Thursday, October 30, 2008, 7:00

p.m. - 8:30 p.m., Moraga Public Library. Space is limited. Come early for best seating! This evening is sponsored by MAAC and is open to all.

Smart Money: Using the Bank Instead of Mom and Dad

Thursday, November 20th, 7-9pm, in the Las Lomas Theater. Learn how to make smart credit choices, apply for auto loans including the hidden expenses involved, and keeping your identity safe. Parents are welcome to attend. This series is brought to you by the Las Lomas PTSA's Parent Ed and Healthy Choices Committees and is free of charge. Hand outs will be available at all sessions. Questions? Contact Karen Schroter. (schroter5@astound.net). RSVP/register through our new online registration site: <http://adulted.acalanes.k12.ca.us/online/reg/>, enter course #056216.

Exchange Student visits the Orinda City Council



Exchange student Daniel Buzu (great shirt) is pictured with host Bobbi Landers and City Councilmembers displaying gifts from Orinda's sister city Tabor in the Czech Republic. Photo A. Firth

Rheem Elementary School Hosts Native American Days

By Jean Follmer



Rheem Elementary School Native American Day Photo provided

Rheem Elementary School recently hosted its long-standing Native American Days. As part of Moraga School District's Living History program, the annual event enables all Moraga 3rd graders to learn about Native Americans and

participate in related activities. The program is run completely by parent volunteers and was coordinated by Rheem parent Sharon Gilbanks. Rheem Elementary teacher Lee Culver said they focus on teaching the students about the community

aspects of the tribe that once lived in the Moraga area. Culver said it's debatable whether or not the Moraga Native Americans were "Saklans who spoke Sakla" or were "Saklas who spoke Saklan."

Upon arrival at Native American Days, each class is divided into three "tribes." Each tribe rotates through four activities: a hike, games, home-building and crafts. During the hour-long hike, students listen to Native American stories while looking for bones and snake skins that were planted by parent volunteers. They also look for significant plants like poison oak and bay leaves. They learn a modern version of a Native American game that trained older children to accurately throw spears. Bark houses were built using redwood and rocks and the kids played floor games inside. The crafts included basket weaving and making prayer sticks. To make the prayer (or wish) sticks, the children wrote their wish on a piece of paper and then wrapped the wish to a stick using yarn, plants and beads. The idea of the prayer stick is to make positive wishes for good health or prosperity and give the completed stick to someone else. Culver said the Native Americans would continue to pass the prayer stick from person to person with the thought that it would eventually return to its maker. "This is the origin of the term Indian Giver. Its origin is really a positive term," said Culver.

Culver said the other components of the Living History program include a focus on early California for 4th graders and early America for 5th graders.

Lamorinda Schools

The College Essay

By Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D.

Seniors all over the country are busy writing their college application essays. Juniors will be doing the same task next year. Students applying to the University of California (UC) are required to write two personal statements (essays) that respond to what are called the "UC Prompts." As a college admissions advisor, I offer my clients guidance in the selection of essay topics, recommendations about how to personalize essays, and editorial assistance. Here are some tips and strategies that work well for all students applying to the UC campuses.

■ Do understand the purpose of the UC personal statement. The UC does not ask for letters of recommendation. Therefore, each campus relies on the personal statement to add clarity, depth and meaning to the student's application. Put simply, the essays help the university to know and understand you better.

■ Do fill out a hard copy of the UC application. Then review it critically. Pretend to be an admissions officer. What questions may come up in the reader's mind? Have you attended different high schools? Have you been employed many hours a week? Did your grades fluctuate? For example, if a student's grades dipped during junior year and she worked many hours

during the same time period, a reader might reasonably wonder: "Why did the student work so many hours at the expense of grades?" A student may work to supplement family income because a parent has lost a job. That is something an admissions reader needs to understand, and you can find a way to weave this information into your essay.

■ Do be yourself and use your own voice. Choose a topic that highlights your strengths. This is not the time to be modest about your accomplishments. On the other hand, if you have had some problems that affected academics, you may be able to craft a personal statement to tell what you have learned and how you have grown from your experiences.

■ Do be certain your essay clearly responds to the question being asked. Get feedback, revise your work and ask someone (a trusted advisor or English teacher) to proof read. Submit work that is free of spelling and grammatical errors, and uses good writing conventions.

A key component of success in college is your ability to write. For this reason, colleges want to know you as a writer. Colleges assess your writing in several ways—for example they look at your course-

work and grades, especially in subjects that require a good deal of writing. If you are a senior, you probably have already taken the SAT or the ACT. The essay section of these standardized tests represents another way colleges evaluate your writing skills. However, the essay section of these tests is time and topic limited. In contrast, the UC personal statement provides an opportunity to compose a personal narrative on a topic of your choosing. It is well worth the time and effort to develop essays that you are proud to submit with your application.

Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. works as an independent college advisor in Lafayette. Dr. LaScala draws on 20 years of experience in higher education and research to customize the college search and admission process for students and their families. She has 3 daughters—one a graduate of Cal Poly (San Luis Obispo), one a sophomore at MIT and the youngest, a junior in high school. Dr. LaScala can be contacted at elizabeth@doingcollege.com or (925) 891-4491.

Contra Costa County Teachers of the Year (TOY)

Submitted by the Contra Costa County Office of Education



Three Lamorinda school district teachers were recently honored as Contra Costa County Teachers of the Year (TOY). The Lamorinda teachers gathered with with other 2008-09 Contra Costa County Teachers of the Year (TOY) at the Concord Hilton Hotel. Pictured from left to right are: Janet Howard, Wagner Ranch Elementary (Orinda Union School District); Diane Wong, Los Perales Elementary (Moraga School District); Erin Caldwell, Springhill Elementary (Lafayette School District) Photo Jonathan Lance, Contra Costa County Office of Education

Dictionary Delivery

Submitted by Dick Burkhalter, Orinda Rotary



Orinda Rotary Club recently delivered dictionaries to all 3rd graders in the Orinda Union School District. The Orinda Rotary Club has delivered 2,700 such dictionaries over the last 10 years. The 95 member organization's motto is "Service Above Self" and the members enjoy giving back to their community. Pictured is Susan Chase's third grade class at Orinda's Wagner Ranch School. Back row: Marshall Johnson, Club President, Dr. Richard Marchick, Susan Chase. Photo submitted by Orinda Rotary Club.

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