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# Lamorinda Schools

## Friendship Fault Lines – How to Help Your Middle School Daughter Build a Firm Foundation for Relationships

By Sophie Braccini



Middle school girls having fun at the Sister to Sister Summit

Picture courtesy of AAUW

It has a name. And let's not kid ourselves, it's insidious, destructive, pervasive and life altering. It happens in schools, communities, via cyberspace and cell phones every day, and it is primarily inflicted on girls, by girls.

What is it? Relational Aggression, or as it is becoming more commonly known, RA.

RA is female bullying and includes behaviors such as spreading rumors, refusing to talk to someone, or excluding them from the group. It can be done in deeply hurtful ways,

and can leave a girl devastated and fearful of returning to school, often interfering with her health and academic achievement.

It is not just a painful experience for the girl, it is also a challenge to her parents. Often their first impulse, to come to a daughter's aid, is an action that will backfire, causing more harm than good. That's why, on October 22nd, the American Association of University Women, Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette branch, sponsors of the annual Sister-to-Sister Summit each March, is offer-

ing a workshop to give parents a toolkit for coping with RA.

"In the ten years I have been working with girls through the Sister-to-Sister this issue has continually come up," says Valarie Burgess, one of the presenters, "I remember how helpless I felt with my own daughters, experiencing vicariously their anguish."

Speaking to school administrators, Burgess became aware of how overwhelmed they felt in the face of girls' meanness. She was very relieved when someone finally

came up with a name for it so it could be addressed head on. Now strategies are being developed that can give parents tools to change what has been an entrenched problem. "We would like to share some of these with parents to not only empower them and their daughters, but to create a healthier, more supportive environment in our schools and communities," adds Burgess.

The workshop on the 22nd will be held at the Orinda Intermediate School. The presenters will address the everyday issues of relational aggression among girls and provide parents with a chest of tools to respond appropriately and give their daughters the confidence they need to deal with it in a constructive manner.

"Raising my own three daughters and working with hundreds of girls through the years, I can see how friends can make it or break it, especially in middle school," says Ksenija Soster Olmer, another of the presenters, "Having at least one trusted friend can make all the difference in the world on how happy a girls is to go to school, how she feels about her changing body or relationships with parents and siblings. Being on the outs, on the other hand, can be pure hell for her and everyone else involved in her life."

The free presentation will be held at OIS on October 22, 7-8:30 pm. Parents and community members are encouraged to attend.



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## Burton Valley Camps Out

By Jean Follmer



Spencer Lewis

Photo Doug Kohen

Burton Valley Elementary School recently held its First Annual Family Campout. The camping logistics were coordinated by Burton Valley parents Annette Robison and Gayle Burleigh. "It was our first annual campout and we had over 100 Burton Valley families that popped up tents," said Robison. The families pitched their tents on the back field at Burton Valley Elementary, enjoyed a buffet-style cookout and watched an outdoor movie.

Robison said one of the highlights of the evening was a speech given by Burton Valley parent and Speed Climber, Hans Florine. Florine's speed climbing partner, Yuji Hirayama, was also present. "They have been after world speed climbing records and are working on El Capitan (in Yosemite National Park) right now," said Robison.

Robison said the "kids ran wild" and everyone had fun. The moms awoke early the next morning to prepare a pancake breakfast. An admission was charged to cover the costs of the social event. "When we do it in the future, we hope to do it as a fundraiser," said Robison.



The camp

Photo Doug Kohen

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## College Application Mania Hits Lamorinda

By Cathy Tyson

Let the nagging begin. Yes, it's that time of year again, when parents of seniors in high school begin tactfully reminding their children to wrap up those applications. With approximately 98% of area high school seniors attending either a four or two-year college, that's quite a bit of "reminding." Fear not, stressed out parents, Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte are lucky enough to each have a dedicated college and career advisor on staff with information not only about the many schools out there, but also on financial aid and scholarships to guide bewildered students through the process.

They even schedule visits from college representatives far and wide so that seniors can get a peak at a variety of schools, hear about their specialties and get a pass to miss class – not a bad deal. For example last week Campolindo hosted representatives from

Williams, Stanford, University of Portland, Bowdoin, Emory, UC Santa Barbara, Vanderbilt and more. In addition our high schools offer college application workshops, information on foreign exchange programs and SAT as well as ACT tests.

Overwhelmed, some parents go through a personal college counselor, who, for a fee, will inquire about a student's strengths and weakness, make suggestions, help figure out the best college "fit" for their child, assist with application essays, and stay on top of deadlines.

"We try not to quantify a number of applications...but beyond ten is a lot of work," said Joan Karr, Acalanes College and Career Center Advisor.

She went on to say that California State Universities will be accepting applications from October 1 through November 30. University of California applications are a little different, students can be working on them through

October, and submit them as of November 1.

The waiting is the hardest part, but some schools have a shorter review period than others. According to Karr, if an eligible student applies to Cal State Chico, notice of acceptance might come back in a couple of months. University of Oregon has rolling admission, so applications are accepted as of late August and students can hear back in six to eight weeks. University of Colorado has a new program that students applying by December 15, should hear back by February. University of California will generally notify students in March; California State Universities around February 1.

*Editor's Note: Readers of the Lamorinda Weekly may also want to check out the regular column of college advisor Elizabeth LaScala (see page 14) which is chock full of great advice.*