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## Election Outreach in Orinda

By Andrea A. Firth



Michele Olsen reads to a Glorietta kindergarten class as part of her election outreach program. Photo A. Firth

As Michele Olsen read to a group of kindergarten students in Ms. Johnson's class at Glorietta Elementary School, she was there as both a mother (of her five-year old son, Sam) and as the Orinda City Clerk. Olsen launched an election outreach program in the Orinda Union School District (OUSD) this year to help young students make sense of the proliferation of brightly colored signs that have appeared on lawns and roadsides throughout their neighborhoods during this historic election season.

"It is important to demystify the election process for the youth in Orinda so they have a better understanding of current events and understand the importance of being an informed citizen," explains Olsen, who has spoken to kindergarten, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th grades classes at Glorietta and Del Rey Schools as part of her election outreach efforts. "My motivation, in part, for organizing this effort was following out the City Council's adopted goals of providing Community Outreach to its residents (both big and small) and partnering with local agencies like OUSD," adds Olsen. "It is also my duty as a Municipal Clerk to educate as many people as possible on the election process, most specifically the importance of voting."

For the younger set, Olsen

read the book *Duck for President*, which tells the story of an ambitious duck who wins his first election against Farmer Brown to become head of the farm. Duck then works his way up to the Presidency but finds that running a country is very hard work. The story concludes with Duck abandoning the political world and at work on his biography. The playful story introduced children to the vocabulary of the voting process with words like candidate, ballot, polling place, and oath.

With the older students, Olsen was able to delve even deeper into the legislative process. In some classes she held mock elections in which students voted by both open and secret ballots. They were able to see first-hand the potential influence of peer pressure on the voting process.

"The students were incredibly informed about the election process, specifically the presidential election," says Olsen. "The questions that they asked were relevant and insightful and demonstrated that they have been taught in an unbiased manner," she adds. Olsen looks forward to continuing and expanding the school election outreach program in the years to come to ensure the kindergarteners of 2008 are casting their votes in the election of 2021.

## A Message from the Moraga Orinda Fire District: Please help us with our Strategic Plan

In 2005, The Moraga-Orinda Fire District revised its Strategic Plan, identifying progressive changes and enhancements to our operational process in order to be able to better serve our customers. We listened to the community, our employees, and other local agencies to develop a sequence of goals, and a 'task' pattern to achieve those goals. We have recently completed our annual review of the Plan, and have noticed that the hard work of all of our employees has paid off handsomely. We have successfully completed nearly all of our planned objectives - two full years ahead of schedule.

We have decided to allow our 2005 Plan to expire and create a new vision for the future. In order to create a comprehensive

new Strategic Plan that will best serve the community, we again would like to hear from you - our valued neighbors and customers. In order to allow the community an opportunity to respond with ease, we are going hi-tech. We are going to utilize an internet survey, as well as offer the ability to provide additional on-line suggestions and comments. The URL is listed below, and the survey will be accessible October 18th through November 18th. For those who would rather not utilize the internet, the District will host meetings with the Fire Chief for comments and suggestions. The dates and locations are listed below.

To utilize the website: <http://ctmsurveys.com/html/mofd08/mofd08.html>

- Meetings:**
- MOFD Administration Bldg - 1280 Moraga Way  
November 17th 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm
  - Orinda City Offices - 22 Orinda Way  
Sarge Littlehale Room  
November 18th 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

## Local Authors Highlighted at Lafayette Library's Sweet Thursday

By Moya Stone

Local Lafayette residents Linda Peterson and Maria Hjelm have been two of the hard working ladies behind the Lafayette Library's popular author reading series Sweet Thursday since its inception six years ago. But the upcoming Sweet Thursday event scheduled for November 13, at 7:30 will honor Linda and Maria as authors. Both women have contributed their literary talents to recently published anthologies.

Many readers will know Linda from her mystery book, *Edited to Death*, featuring magazine writer Maggie Fiori - the "arrogant but likable" amateur detective. Linda is just finishing up the second in that series while helping to promote "Writin' on Empty: Parents Reveal the Upside, Downside, and Everything In Between when Children Leave the Nest" for which she wrote the opening essay, *Naked Parents in the Pool*.

The book is a collection of essays about the universal experience of children leaving home and includes authors such as the San Francisco Chronicle's C.W. Nevius, the New York Times John Leland, and Linda Weltner from the Boston Globe. Edited by empty nesters Joan Cehn, Risa Nye, and Julie Renalds, *Writin' on Empty* started as a conversation among women sharing feelings about sending their children out into the world. Soon the three women decided there was an obvious niche to fill. Linda, who also works full time as a marketing executive, met Risa in a writers group and became involved in the project.

Linda's only son is 30 now and has a baby of his own, but Linda says the day he left home for good is as fresh for her as if it happened yesterday, "I missed the noise, excitement, and chaos of having a teenager around," says Linda. But she also concedes that there are a few upsides as well. "Fridge freedom," she says. "We no longer have to worry about what's in the fridge." In her essay, Linda approaches the topic with humor sharing stories of her meltdowns and tirades the first few weeks after her son, Ben, left for

college, and then the surprising upside, like late night skinny-dips in the family swimming pool.

Maria, who has a background in book publishing and now works in fundraising at UC Berkeley, became involved with the book, "Knowing Pains: Women on Love, Sex and Work in Our 40s" through a friend. This collection of essays addresses another niche - the shift women make into their 40s, having achieved a certain level of success and confidence, and how they deal with issues such as aging parents, death, divorce, motherhood, sex, and more. Edited by local businesswoman Molly Tracy Rosen, *Knowing Pains* came from Molly's desire, on her 40th birthday, to read about other women in their 40s. She went to the bookstore and found nothing on the subject, thus she decided to fill the gap herself.

In her essay, *Just a Blip*, Maria shares her story of losing her mother, who was diagnosed with cancer on Maria's 39th birthday and died two months short of her 40th birthday. She says in her essay: "So, here's my quarrel, my bone to pick, my beef with being 40 - it's all too adult, and I prefer to pretend that I'm still 28. You'd think that having three kids, a mortgage, and a marriage that needs constant tending would have turned me into an adult, but it's the learning to live without the protection of my mother that has finally done it."

Maria says she is struck by this shared experience of turning 40. "There are so many different ways to experience 40," says Maria, "I marvel at the strength of women and how different we all are and the many different ways to experience the same thing."

Joining Maria and Linda on the November 13 Sweet Thursday event will be *Knowing Pains* editor Molly Rosen and contributor Nancy Davis Kho, and *Writin' on Empty* editor Risa Nye and contributor Laura Shumaker. Copies of both books will be available for purchase, with proceeds going to breast cancer education. For more information contact the Lafayette Library at 283-3872.

## Lamorinda Prepares to Face Disaster

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"The triage team identified me as immediate and I was dispatched to the red tarp," he said. He was then directed to an ambulance. Thomas was lucky there was an ambulance, "If there is an incident of this magnitude here," said Moraga Chief of Police Mark Ruppenthal, "roads might be closed and evacuation impossible. You might be looking at two weeks before any public agency shows up."

The importance of self-reliance was constantly reinforced. "You might have only one or two police officers on duty when something happens," said Lieutenant Robert Priebe, "and we are lucky that some of the Public Works people live close by." Dan Bernie's Public Works team was there and manifested their presence and efficiency, interfacing with CERT volunteers and flying from incident to

incident to bring help. CERT's Gordon Nathan, who was instrumental in the preparation of the drill, described the 3 objectives of the training: "1- Organization, 2- Communication, 3- Interfacing with public agencies." During the debriefing that followed the volunteers were rated a 6 (out of 10): They did a good job, but there was room for improvement.

"I was very impressed by the turn out and how people immediately got involved," said a Lieutenant from the Orinda Police Department, "I saw a bit of temper flaring and some uncertainty regarding specific skills, but on the whole it was a good experience."

The next CERT training will start on February 5th 2009; go to [lamorindacert.org](http://lamorindacert.org) for more information.

Monica Casale - Owner/Bookkeeper

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**Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church, Orinda, 254-3422**

- 8:15 a.m. Traditions Worship Service
- 9:15 a.m. Coffee Fellowship
- 9:40 a.m. Education for all ages
- 10:45 a.m. Celebrations Worship Service

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If you would like your services listed, please email to [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com) or call 925-377-0977.  
A one inch listing will cost \$20.

Send Letters and Opinions to [letters@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com)