

Life in LAMORINDA

Halloween Goes Hollywood in Moraga

By Andrea A. Firth



Members of the Star Wars cast who will be performing at 12 Linden Place in Moraga on Halloween. Photo A. Firth

Halloween goers will be treated to much more than a chocolate bar or lollipop when they stop at 12 Linden Place in Moraga on October 31st. For the past ten years, Michele Wilson and her brother Greg have made Halloween a Hollywood affair treating the kids who visit to a five-minute skit based on a popular movie. This year's skit will feature two scenes from the first Stars Wars movie (Episode IV).

"People call this the Halloween house," says the Wilsons' mom Lyn, whose driveway and garage serve as the stage for the pro-

duction. The outdoor "set" includes Han Solo's spaceship and the Mos Eisley Cantina on the planet of Tatooine.

Michele, who has acted and sung on stage and the big screen, serves as writer, actor, costume designer, and director for the Halloween show while brother Greg contributes creatively and manages the lighting and audio. Michele has recruited a loyal group of family members and friends to round out the cast that includes Chewbacca—Han Solo's large and furry comrade, Princess Leia and brother Luke Sky-

walker, the villainous Darth Vader, and the robot C-3PO. Even R2 D2 (a cleverly disguised shop-vac vacuum) makes an appearance.

"Kids get dropped off by the vanload to come see the skit," states Lyn Wilson proudly. Previous Halloween skits have included Michele and friends dressed as witches and hanging from brooms on the front porch (scenes from the movie Hocus Pocus) and outfitted as Dorothy and friends traveling down the yellow brick road (scenes from The Wizard of OZ).

We do have lots of fun doing

the skit. It's a win-win for everyone," says Michele's friend Judy Shumate who will portray Princess Leia for the evening. She encourages folks out on Halloween to stop by and enjoy the show. To see the Wilsons' Halloween skit, stop by 12 Linden Place (at the corner of Linden and Corliss) in Moraga.

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Youth Commission's Haunted House Rocks

By Cathy Tyson



Once again, the Lafayette Youth Commission (LYC) has worked long and hard to put together their annual Haunted House fundraiser event. Just a few weeks ago they still needed random body parts, toe tags and surgical scrubs, among other things, but it all came together into the truly creepy expe-

rience that has become an institution. This year's theme was Nightmare.

Who knew that the Community Center could be transformed into the Morgue room, Circus room, Psychedelic room and more. Not only have Youth Commission members created a performance "Night-

mare," but these teens were savvy enough to make the "House" only semi-scary for kids under 7 during early hours, and super scary for an extra \$2. for those eight and older into the evening hours. Thereby maximizing the fear factor and revenue.

All of the ticket proceeds after expenses benefit the youth of Lafayette. Last year they made approximately \$5,000. The LYC paid for half of the cost of Stanley Intermediate School's new scoreboard, and they've also contributed to the Moraga Skate Park.

Just who are these kids who donate their time? Brayton Noll is President this year, Naomi Wasserman is Vice President, both are seniors at Campolindo. About thirty teens were asked at a recent meeting why they belong, their answers ranged from "Love Lafayette" to "support the community" to "looks good on college applications." The group chose the theme, and worked on committees to design and set up the rooms and spent hours working on the event last weekend. Whatever the reason, these students are creating something from nothing and in the process making the community more vibrant, and scary, at least for a few days each year.

Freedom Writers' Teacher to Speak at Saint Mary's

By Andrea A. Firth



On November 22nd, Erin Gruwell, the teacher on whom the movie Freedom Writers is based will speak at Saint Mary's College (SMC) in Moraga as part of the Distinguished Speakers Series. "We are very excited about Erin coming," states Dr. Kathy Perez

who is the Director of Teaching Leadership at SMC and who has known Ms. Gruwell for several years. "She is a very inspirational speaker. She puts the heart back into teaching and education," she adds. Gruwell will talk about her passion for teaching and describe how she transformed high risk, struggling students into well read, college-going young men and women. For those who have seen the movie Freedom Writers, Perez has one caveat, "As good as Hilary Swank is, Erin is better."

Gruwell's presentation is part of SMC's ongoing Distinguished Speakers Series that is held on selected Saturdays throughout the school year (see sidebar). "The Sat-

urday Seminar series has been conducted for 15 years," states Perez. Although traditionally structured for beginning teachers and their mentors, this year's Series includes speakers that will appeal to a broad audience notes Perez.

Each Seminar starts with a continental breakfast, which is followed by the keynote presentation. Attendees then choose from a variety of topic-specific breakout sessions in which to participate. The morning ends with a buffet lunch. The next seminar in January will feature Mike Geisen, the National Teacher of the Year. Geisen is an innovative middle school teacher who uses music and technology to humor and motivate students. Comedian and author Michael Pritchard will speak in February followed by author Jo Gusman who will discuss teaching English language learners.

Further information on the Distinguished Speakers Series can be found at <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/academics/schools/school-of-education/> or by calling (925) 631-4811.

SMC Distinguished Speakers Series		
November 22 nd	Erin Gruwell	Teacher, actress, author of Freedom Writers fame
January 24 th	Mike Geisen	National Teacher of the Year
February 21 st	Dr. Michael Pritchard	Save our Schools—Live Love, Laugh, Learn!
March 21 st	Jo Gusman	Teaching English Learners



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