

SCHOOL CALENDAR

School Governing Board Meetings

Acalanes Union

High School District
Board Room AUHSD Office
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette
Wednesday, Oct. 29 at 7:30 pm
- Special Session
Wednesday, Nov. 19

Lafayette School District

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

Orinda Union School District

OUSD Office
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda
Monday, Nov. 17 at 1:00 pm

Moraga School District

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
Monday, Nov. 18 at 7:30pm

Not to be missed - Teens & Parents

SILENT AUCTION FUNDRAISER FOR SCOTT TURNER'S FAMILY: Scott Turner is a teacher at Burton Valley Elementary. His father has been diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease). He is hoping to raise money to cover costs for his dad's care which are not covered by insurance. Please join friends and family on Saturday, Nov 15th from 6-10pm at the Walnut Creek Elk's Lodge, Creekside Drive in Walnut Creek. Cost is \$35.00. For more information on how to obtain your ticket contact Alicia Turner at 980-4678 or Marsha King at 283-7180 or mchking@comcast.net. If you would like to donate an item for the Silent Auction or help in other areas, please call Alicia or Marsha.

A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children (James T. Webb, Ph.D. and others) Join other parents for a discussion of this book and share your own parenting experiences and tips. Monday, Nov 17th, 7:00-8:30pm, library, Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga. No fee, register at event or on-line (course #056102) at <http://adulted.acalanes.k12.ca.us/onlinereg/>.

Smart Money: Using the Bank Instead of Mom and Dad Thursday, Nov. 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. Handouts will be available at all sessions. Register on line: (course #056216) <http://adulted.acalanes.k12.ca.us/onlinereg/>.

Staying Connected to Your Teenager (Dr. Michael Riera, Ph.D.) Tuesday, Dec 2nd, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School library, 1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga. Our discussion facilitator will be JM school counselor, Ms. Heidi Felt.

Disaster Drill at Local Schools



OIS students go under cover during a disaster drill conducted throughout the Orinda Union School District and Miramonte High School on October 23rd. Photo Andy Schreck

Lamorinda Schools

AUHSD Facilities Bond Passes Convincingly

By Andrea A. Firth

With 63.9% of voters in support, Measure E—the \$93 million Acalanes Union High School District (ACUHSD) Facilities Bond—convincingly surpassed the 55% threshold for approval. “I was extremely pleased with the results,” reports Cheryl Knoll, a Campolindo parent who helped to spearhead the Measure E campaign. “The people in this community value what I consider is our most important asset—quality schools. I was happy to see that people wanted to continue to invest in our schools for this generation and those to come.”

Although bonds were sold within four months of approving the previous bond measure in 2002, Chris Learned, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services for AUHSD, is not sure that things will move as quickly this time around. “Because of what is going on in the bond market right now, timing will be important,” states Learned.

The District has planned to issue three series of bonds over a six to eight year period. The first series, originally estimated at

\$50 million, may be smaller according to Learned. “If we sell bonds by March of next year, some of the work may start in the summer,” he explains. These would be smaller projects that do not require architectural approval by the State, which can take up to eight months.

“We are going to be very prudent and careful on how we proceed,” says AUHSD Governing Board member Tom Mulvaney. “We are starting the planning process, and a preliminary project schedule will be presented at the next meeting of the Governing Board on November 19th.”

The District will start recruiting for a citizen’s oversight committee in December and appointments will be made by January. The committee will include a broad range of citizens representative of the community. “The oversight committee is key to the efficient administration of the program,” states Mulvaney. “We are looking for people who can provide a common sense approach to how to administer the funds for these projects.”

Budget Update

On Thursday, November 6, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proposed \$4.5 billion in spending reductions across state government and \$4.7 billion in revenue increases to help close the state’s budget shortfall; this would include \$2.5 billion in cuts to K-12 education.

Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) Superintendent Jim Negri stated, “Under the Governor’s proposed budget, the AUHSD would lose approximately \$300 per student on the revenue limit plus it would lose the minimal .68% increase cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in the current budget. These cuts translate into a \$2,100,000 loss of revenue this year. In order to adopt a balanced 2008-2009 budget last June, the district had to cut \$1,000,000 and ask the parent clubs and foundations for \$1,000,000. The proposed mid-year cuts are greater than what the district had to cut last June.

The Governing Board and district staff will be carefully reviewing the Governor’s proposal and working to ensure that our students continue to receive the high quality education that they deserve.”

Economic Impact on Kids

By Jean Follmer

Santa Claus may be broke this year. He may not be able to bring that \$700 game system. A Lafayette mom said the annual Tahoe family ski trip may be off this winter. The economic downturn is impacting more than our job security, our portfolios, our home values and our personal stress levels: it is impacting our families and our children.

A survey of some local child-driven businesses supports this. “Kids ‘N Dance is down from about 350 to 190 students. It’s devastating,” said Kris Mueller, owner of Kids ‘N Dance in Lafayette. “In summer, it (registration) was low. In fall is when I started counting. It’s down to almost as low as when I started 15 years ago,” said Mueller.

High-end children’s clothing boutiques have also noticed a change. “I do think October was a tough month for most businesses. You have to be very creative and work hard to do well,” said Laurie Ivry of Red Wagon in Lafayette.

Toys are not quite as evident. Handlebar Toys owner Lance Ghulam said it’s hard to tell how the holiday season will be because there is always a natural drop in the 4th quarter leading up to the holidays.

Ghulam believes that holiday gifts for children will be one of the last areas that parents will cut. “Buying a toy is cheaper than taking them on vacation,” said Ghulam. He has, however, noticed a possible impact of the economic downturn. “There has been a pretty drastic cut in kids coming in and buying toys themselves,” said Ghulam. Ghulam said it was not uncommon for local children to enter the store with \$20-\$30 in hand to buy a Lego set. “I think parents are watching that more closely,” said Ghulam.

The economic downturn has impacted some children in ways beyond the acquisition of material goods and luxury of enrichment activities: it has changed family life. One Lamorinda mother told the Lamorinda Weekly how her family has been impacted by the economic downturn; her husband is an independent contractor and has experienced difficulty securing enough work in the area. The situation has forced him to regularly commute out of state for work. While the family would consider relocating to be together, they don’t want to put their house on the market at this time. Although the children are currently enrolled in a private school, the family

will be moving to the public school system next year.

Other Lamorinda families have suffered job losses. One family could no longer afford their mortgage payments after the father lost his job. They immediately put their house on the market and are uncertain about their future. Marriage and Family Therapist Margie Ryerson said the impact of job loss on children can be extensive. “Personally, I’ve seen many kids’ parents lose their jobs over the years and it ultimately makes the kids more resilient and compassionate. But in the meantime it’s embarrassing and even shameful for them. Of course, the fallout is a lot of anger directed at the parents who were supposed to protect them and some act out—misbehaving in school, slacking off academically and testing limits,” said Ryerson.

These are tough times for many families and economists are not predicting a quick fix to the downturn. We need to be realistic with our expectations and more cautious in our spending. “It helps that many families are cutting back this year, even the ones with steady employment, but it’s still a tough situation,” said Ryerson.

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OPEN HOUSE

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“Boogie for Baha” Dance-a-thon at Seedlings Preschool

Submitted by Jenny Shepherd (edited by Jean Follmer)



Developmental Kindergarten class: Back Row / Left to Right: Brady Brinkman, Tyler Singh, Hayden Abolins, Joseph O’Dea, Madeline Seburn, Benji Braunstein, Melissa Morris. Front Row / Left to Right: Francesca Vasconi, Alexia Dunlavey, Allie Wayland, Anna Watson, Logan Ketcham, and Niels Ekstrand

Photo submitted

Seedlings Preschool of Lafayette recently held the “Boogie for Baha” Dance-a-thon to raise tuition funds for the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children in Gaza City, Palestine. The Atfaluna Society is a school specifically designed to educate poverty-stricken deaf children within Gaza City. Seedlings “adopted” an 8-year old Palestinian boy named Baha’ Hammo. The proceeds from the dance-a-thon will go toward Baha’s annual tuition. Baha’ is one of six children and the only deaf child in his family. He is known as a funny student who loves to play with his classmates and siblings.

As the preschool of Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, Seedlings has held similar fundraisers to promote world peace (without borders) over the past 5 years. The experiences have been very fulfilling for the families LOPC and Seedlings and have enabled the Seedlings children to learn compassion for other children throughout the world.

In preparation for the dance-a-thon, the children were shown photos of Baha’. They looked at a globe to determine how far away he lives and learned a few simple things in sign language. The dance-a-thon was held on October 29 and

involved all of the Seedlings students. Children aged from babies to 5 years old danced for 15 minutes on each day and had a great time with freeze dances, running around, and being silly. Their fun paid off.

It takes only \$600 to sponsor one deaf child’s schooling for an entire year at Atfaluna. As of the date of this article, Seedlings is well on its way to surpassing the more than \$1,000 raised in 2007’s fundraiser. For more information or to contribute to Seedlings’ effort on behalf of the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, please contact Jenny Shepherd at (925) 360-7003.