

## SCHOOL CALENDAR

### School Governing Board Meetings

**Acalanes Union High School District**  
Board Room AUHSD Office  
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette  
Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2009 at 7:30  
(location of the 2/4 meeting has been changed to Las Lomas High School Theater, 1460 S. Main St, Walnut Creek)

Monday, February 9, 2009 at 6:00  
– Special Meeting to hear public comment and input on the proposed budget cuts (location: Del Valle Library)

Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2009 at 7:30  
(\*Ed. Note: Budget-related actions may be taken at this meeting)

### Lafayette School District

LAFSD Office  
3477 School Street, Lafayette  
Wednesday, Feb. 18 at 7:00

### Moraga School District

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium  
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga  
Tuesday, Feb. 10 at 7:30

### Orinda Union School District

OUSD Office  
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda  
Monday, Feb. 9 at 4:00

# Lamorinda Schools

## It's LASF Science Fair Season

By Jean Follmer

The LASF Science Fair season is here and the Lafayette schools are busy with preparations. The LASF Science Fairs require many hours and often months of planning and behind-the-scenes efforts of many dedicated volunteers. Springhill Elementary was the first Lafayette School to hold its LASF Science Fair this year. “We started planning in November and it took over 65 parents and volunteers,” said Springhill LASF Science Fair Co-Chair Sharon Kidd. The efforts proved successful and the school experienced a higher student participation rate than last year. “Almost all of the classes had over a 50% participation rate and I think that’s really impressive,” said Springhill Co-Chair Rhodora Del Rosario.

The rest of the Lafayette schools have LASF Science Fairs scheduled later this month and in March: Happy Valley Elementary on February 19, Lafayette Elementary on February 26, Burton Valley Elementary on March 19 and Stanley Middle on March 25. Mary Ilyin and Maureen Bagley are co-chairing the LASF Science Expo at Stanley this year. Ilyin chaired her first LASF Science Fair as a Lafayette Elementary parent and is now chairing Stanley’s LASF Expo for the second time.

Stanley holds the LASF Science Expo every other year, alternating with the LASF Rube Goldberg Fair. Ilyin said she and Bagley have been planning the Stanley Expo for months and she’ll have logged between 80 and 100 hours by the time it’s over. The Stanley Expo will include options such as a wheelchair obstacle races, a head injury specialist showing what can happen if you don’t bother to wear or buckle your helmet, star-gazing with the Lawrence Berkeley Labs, the Lindsay Wildlife Museum and Guitar Hero. “We try to have a diverse group. We try to have it diverse enough so kids who are into astronomy can look at the stars and kids

who are into animals can experience animals. Science is in everything we do in life,” said Ilyin. Ilyin encourages the public to attend the LASF Science Expo at Stanley.

Lafayette Elementary parent Janet Estee is co-chairing the



school’s LASF Science Fair this year. Estee is a Molecular Biologist and works on gene therapy at Sangamo BioSciences. “Last year I was a guest scientist at the (LASF Lafayette Elementary) science fair and I wanted to get more involved,” said Estee. Guest scientists are generally parent volunteers in white LASF lab coats. The lab coats make the interviews seem more official to the students and a number of the volunteers are actually in a science-related field. They interview the student scientists about their projects to discover what may have motivated the student to do the particular project and what they learned.

Through LASF, Estee has partnered with the Lafayette Library. Estee said Youth Services Librarian Donna Lenhardt has been especially supportive and has placed numerous scientific experiment books and posters on display throughout the library. “The library has been great pulling the books. The books were gone so quickly at Lafayette Elementary,” said Estee. Estee has a personal collection of antique science glassware that is currently on display at the Lafayette Library.

Estee and her 3rd grader daughter have taken the “science ex-

periment” to a new level. Last year, her daughter extracted DNA from common household products like strawberries and dishwashing soap. Estee said “This year we’re going to set up an assembly line so they (the other students) can see how different reagents work.” A reagent is a test substance that is added in order to bring about a reaction or to see whether a reaction occurs. They’ll show the DNA of an onion. “It starts out a soapy mixture with chopped up onion and then we pour on the isopropyl alcohol. They’ll see how the DNA will go through the different layers. The DNA actually just floats up and you can see the strands. I went through it with my daughter, but she actually did it. My daughter wants to do neuroscience – it’s sweet of her to want to understand what I do,” said Estee.

LASF has been actively involved in the Lafayette and Acalanes Union High School Districts since 1980. LASF is instrumental in providing “curriculum-based programs and support in the areas of science, math, history, writing, foreign language, technology, art, and music to the students of all of Lafayette’s public schools.” The volunteer organization was founded “in response to education cutbacks resulting from Proposition 13.” LASF Executive Director Myrna Kimmelman said the level of participation at each of the LASF Science Fairs is outstanding. The fairs are also visible venues for LASF itself. “I think it’s a really wonderful way for the schools to learn more about what LASF does,” said Kimmelman. With generous community support and the efforts of over 100 volunteers, LASF was able to raise over \$1 million for the Lafayette public schools last year. LASF is already an essential educational component of the Lafayette Schools. With the current budget crisis, LASF’s involvement will only become more critical for Lafayette’s public schools.

## Not to be missed

“The Truth About Girls’ Middle School Experience”, a Q&A with a panel of high school girls from all four schools in the Acalanes High School District. These girls have not only attended our local middle schools, but also work with current middle school girls in so they really have a pulse on what is happening in our community. The panel is brought to you and moderated by AAUW (American Association of University Women), aauwoml.org. Join us for a free and lively session Wednesday, February 18th 7:00-8:30 at Orinda Intermediate School Multi Purpose Room. Light refreshments served.

**Acalanes High School will hold a blood drive** on February 19, 2009 from 8:30 - 2:30 in the Big Gym. Students are strongly encouraged to donate; the public is also welcome. Blood Centers of the Pacific will conduct the drive, with the support of the Acalanes Health Council, Acalanes Leadership Blood Drive committee, Acalanes Parents Club and Healthy Choices committee.

We encourage our donors to sign up online <http://tinyurl.com/bmhft6> That way they are in the database for Blood Centers of the

Pacific and can easily be sent reminders about opportunities to donate. You can donate blood every 2 months! School Nurse Dvora Citron’s Blackboard website also has more info on the Blood Drive (tab to the left): <http://tinyurl.com/5zena8>.

**Acalanes Parent Ed Presents: Drive Smart, Stay Safe.** The California Highway Patrol offers this free class at Acalanes on Tuesday, February 24th, 6:00-8:00 pm, Cafeteria. This program, sponsored by the CHP, is for parents and teens to attend together. It is designed to reduce the number of teenage injuries and deaths resulting from motor vehicle collisions. Space is limited, to register for the class, please sign up at: <http://www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/adulted/html/pehighschool.htm> Class # 056214.

Or email: [LGSENDME@SBCGLOBAL.NET](mailto:LGSENDME@SBCGLOBAL.NET)

**The California State Summer School for the Arts (InnerSpark)** is now welcoming applications for 520 motivated high school-aged visual, literary, media and performing artists for its 23rd session in July 2009. The selected students will have the unique opportunity to spend four weeks

studying and working with professional artists, writers and performers of national stature. Instruction is offered in the fields of Animation, Film/Video, Creative Writing, Dance, Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts. The talented teenagers who successfully complete the program receive three units of California State University course credit. Application forms and instructions see [www.innerspark.us](http://www.innerspark.us) or call the Sacramento headquarters at (916) 274-5815.

**Healthy Bodies, Healthy Mind in High School, College, and Beyond:** Helping Your Teen Thrive With Positive Self Image, Tuesday, March 3rd, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm, Acalanes Theatre, no fee. Topics Include: Parent Influence Weight as a Cultural Obsession, Sexuality/Social Life--How self image affects decisions, eating and exercise. What happens when they leave home? Sponsored by Acalanes Parent Ed, for more information email [lgsendme@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lgsendme@sbcglobal.net).

**“Peace through Art and Writing Challenge.”** The contest is open to Contra Costa County high school and middle school students. The students are invited to enter any of three categories: Essay, Creative Writing, or Art in any medium. All entries are evaluated by independent judges. The theme of this year’s challenge is “If you were the President, what measures would you implement to advance world peace?” The deadline for submitting entries is Friday, March 6, 2009. Students are asked to deliver or send their work to the Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center, 55 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (writing entries may be emailed to [WritingContest@mtdpc.org](mailto:WritingContest@mtdpc.org)). Cash prizes, ranging from \$50 to \$500, depending on grade level and achievement, will be awarded to winners

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### Family Focus

## High School – The Best Years of Our Lives?

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

People in my line of work can say the same thing about practicing therapy as Forrest Gump said about life: “Therapy is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you’re going to get.” Some unpredictable issues arise from time to time.

I’ve been seeing a college sophomore, “Mia,” for over a year, working with her on building confidence and developing healthier relationships. Recently she mentioned how upset she is to have missed out on the best years of her life. When I asked her to explain, Mia said her high school years were supposed to be the best time of her whole life, but she didn’t enjoy them. Evidently, she had heard this notion from her parents, a teacher, and some of her friends.

The problem with this concept is twofold; if these years are indeed the best years, then what is there to look forward to afterwards? And if they are the best years, but people like Mia didn’t enjoy them, how sad and depressing to have missed out!

This idea must have origi-

nated decades ago, before many of the current pressures in high school existed. The pressures these days are immense: excelling in academics, sports, and other extracurricular activities, being popular and well-liked, getting into a good college, being physically attractive, and maintaining good relationships with family and friends. Often there are financial concerns, family disruptions, and emotional issues with which to contend.

I asked some friends whether their high school years were the best ones of all and got a mixed response. As for me, I think I peaked in fifth grade! No matter what our own experiences were, we need to be careful not to create expectations in the minds of our children. They need to know there is much to look forward to, and the pressures they face in high school will ease in many respects as they get older.

Many college students from the Lamorinda area remark how they find college much easier than high school. Fortunately, they have been well-prepared in our schools,

and they finally have more time for themselves after the harried pace of high school. By college, some students think that these must be the best years of their lives.

High school students need reassurance that while these years are full of ups and downs, the best is yet to come.

I am preparing a column on parents’ regrets. We all have some regrets about what decisions we have made as parents. What would you say or do differently in retrospect? Hearing about other parents’ regrets can help us avoid feeling too guilty and also allow us to learn from each other. Please email your regret to [margierye@yahoo.com](mailto:margierye@yahoo.com). I will use your name only if you authorize permission; otherwise the submissions will be anonymous.

**Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a marriage and family therapist in Orinda and Walnut Creek. She can be contacted at 925-376-9323 or [margierye@yahoo.com](mailto:margierye@yahoo.com).**

## Glorietta Auction Goes Online

By T.R. Audley

January marks the home stretch for grade schools that are planning spring auctions. In years past, funds raised might have transformed playground structures or upgraded computer labs. This year, however, with state education budget cuts looming, there may be more fundamental demands for auction dollars.

With these higher stakes and potentially less dispensable income in the pockets of school families, auction committees are pressed to try new approaches. One school has turned to technology for help. On January 21st, Orinda’s Glorietta School began their auction online and they’re already reaping a reward. “In the first 5 days, we closed bidding on items,” reports Catherine Pines, Glorietta’s auction chair. Prior to event planning last year, Pines stumbled upon a New York Times article about BiddingForGood.com, an online auction site for non-profits. “You go on the website, browse for a charity and then see what they have for sale,” says Pines.

Online presales have thus far

included “time sensitive” and “buy now” items. Also posted are out-of-state items such as tickets to the US Open in New York. “Our family has emailed friends in New York so they can bid as well,” says Pines.

eMarket, the company that operates BiddingForGood.com, offers



charities a downloadable kit to start their auction. The site also offers specific tips for K-12 schools on how to market an online auction. “It’s a good fit for schools because it easily brings together alumnae, extended family and the community who want to support their local school,” says Gina Porcaro of eMarket. So why aren’t more schools doing it?

“It’s new,” says Sandy Preto, a parent at Los Perales School in Mor-

aga, who used the site for their auction last year, “and it’s hard to judge the impact, I just know it was necessary.” Last year’s physical auction site for Los Perales School was too small to display all the items for sale. The story is similar for Glorietta School this year. Out of the over 300 families at Glorietta School, only 170 can attend the auction night due to space limitations. “It’s first come, first served,” says Pines about ticket sales. “So the online auction is even more important this year to give everyone a chance to participate.”

While hopefully allowing for wider family participation, local auction chairs have discovered another perk of auctioning online. “It creates a sense of community at school and a buzz before the auction night,” Preto and Pines agree. Since the site allows bidders to see the email user names of those bidding against them, Pines reports “parents are talking and joking with each other at school about who is winning items. It’s fun!” Glorietta School’s online auction will run through February 18, 2009 at [BiddingForGood.com](http://BiddingForGood.com).

## Moraga Education Foundation Announces Annual Campolindo High School Mini-Grant Recipients for 2008-2009

Submitted by Erica Zeidenberg

The Moraga Education Foundation (MEF) has announced the recipients of the Campolindo High School 2008-2009 MEF mini-grants. Each year MEF rewards innovation in the classroom by funding teacher-requested “mini-grants”. This year the Campolindo MEF Mini-Grants Committee awarded eleven projects totaling \$17,295.50. The awards encompass projects from the science, visual and performing arts, technical education, physical education, special education and social studies departments.

The Campolindo mini-grant awards are for projects this school year. Mini-grants are typically announced in late spring for the next school year. The 2008/09 mini-grants being funded at Campolindo High School are as follows:

### SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

#### Molecular Structure Modeling Set

(teacher R. Eaton)  
Chemistry and Advanced Placement Chemistry students will build molecules and gain a better understanding of their structure, properties, and intermolecular forces

#### Inside the Atom (M.Dunaway)

Chemistry students will learn atomic structure and demonstrate the existence of electrons through the use of a paddlewheel Crookes’ tube

### VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS DEPARTMENT

#### Perfect Portraiture

(D. Hovey-LaCour)  
Digital photography students will

sharpen their studio photography techniques through the use of larger studio lighting equipment  
*Careers in Event Production (J. Seligman)*

Video Production Students II/III will plan and implement the closing performance of a multimedia festival through the use of professional stage lighting, various drum trigger kit modules, and musical instrument digital interface (MIDI) devices

### TECHNICAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

#### Campolindo Woodshop Modernization Phase 2:

*Table Saw Replacement (D.Dupont)*

Students at every level of Wood Technology classes will benefit from using a state-of-the-art Saw-Stop table saw and accessories, as they surface rough lumber into smooth wood for a multitude of wood shop projects

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

*Alternative Swimming Activity with the Speedo Hydro Belt (N. Fagan)*  
Physical Education students with special needs or sports injuries will benefit from the use of a flotation belt during their aquatic physical education activities

### SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

*Additional Ninth Grade English Resource Materials (B. Holmlund)*

Students with learning needs will benefit from using multiple CD sets and synopses of literary works read in Ninth Grade English

### SOCIAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT

*New World Atlases for Modern World History Projects (L. Herzig)*

World Atlas classroom reference sets will enhance World History students’ understanding of geographic features of the countries they study

*Using Literature to Enhance the Study of History (B. Vinton)*

Classroom sets of Marjane Satrapi’s graphic novel *Persepolis* the Story of a Childhood will enhance World History students’ understanding of the Middle East and the Iranian Revolution

*Bringing to Life the Civil Rights Movement (M. Henrikson)*

United States History students will deepen their understanding of the civil rights movement by watching the documentary *Little Rock Central High: 50 Years Later* and by reading classroom sets of *Warriors Don’t Cry*, the autobiography of Melba Pattillo Beals, one of the Central High students integrated in 1957  
*Psychology Videos and Manipulatives (B. Rosenberg)*  
Psychology students will study the structure of the brain through manipulating life-size brain models and they will enhance their understanding of human behavior by viewing 26 “Discovering Psychology” video presentations

To learn more about MEF, visit [www.mef.moraga.k12.ca.us](http://www.mef.moraga.k12.ca.us).



The Stanley Middle School Jazz Messengers, directed by Bob Athayde and assisted by Tommy Davidson, visited all four Lafayette elementary schools to perform their Around the World in a Day tour. Although Athayde had suffered a recent back injury, he was present and in great spirits.  
Photo submitted by Krista McGuire