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LAMORINDA Community

What's it Worth?

Appraisal Event Held at Orinda Theater

By Andrea A. Firth



Michaan's Appraiser, Jane Alexiadis, with Lafayette resident Lisa Albert
Photo A. Firth

Lafayette resident Lisa Albert turned up at the appraisal event held in Orinda's Theater last week with a large painting of farmers working in a rice paddy. "It's not quite the style of our home, but I was curious to find out more about it," Albert said of the painting that had been hanging in her home for years.

As she presented the painting to Jane Alexiadis, an appraiser with Michaan's Auctions, Albert shared some interesting background, or provenance in antique terms. Albert and her husband received the painting from her husband's parents. Albert's in-laws

had lived in the Philippines during World War II and were both POWs. They survived the War but lost all their possessions and home and returned to the States to settle and rebuild their lives. The couple went back to the Philippines in the late 1940's to try to revive their shipping company and purchased this painting by the well-known Philippine artist Fernando Amorsolo. Alexiadis was familiar with Amorsolo's work and had done some research in advance, so she was able to provide Albert with background on the artist, examples of his work, and an approximation of the painting's value.

"Ideally we are provided with some information about the painting or item we are trying to appraise," explained Alexiadis, "but there are many different ways to solve the mysteries that surround the pieces we evaluate." As an example, Alexiadis explained that she sometimes consults with a horticulturist or botanist to identify the plants in a painting to help her to pinpoint the location and period of the scene depicted. Michaan's appraisers can often provide an evaluation on the spot or will follow up via email or phone after getting further information.

Michaan's Auctions holds weekly appraisal events at their showroom in Alameda. This was the first time that they hosted an appraisal event in Orinda, and several area residents made appointments in advance for evaluations of decorative art including an old violin, a set of silverware, cocktail shakers, and Asian fine art and prints. The appraisals are free, and Michaan's can facilitate the sale of items through their monthly Estate and Annex Auctions. Michaan's will hold their next appraisal event at the Orinda Theater on Thursday, April 23rd from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information got to michaans.com.

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Fundraising in Today's Economy

By Cathy Tyson

It was standing room only for the presentation, "Fundraising in Today's Economy," sponsored by the Lafayette Community Foundation. "We want to bring as many resources to the community as we can," said emcee Anne Grodin, Foundation Board Member. The Community Foundation supports projects that promote the civic, cultural, educational and environmental health of Lafayette. Helping other non-profits is right up their alley. Since 2000 they have given over \$141,000 to support a long list of community non-profit organizations.

"It was a wild success," said Grodin noting this event was the first of its kind for the foundation. "We found there was a great need for information in the community. We feel this is part of our mission, expanding philanthropy and giving locally."

Recognizing that the many non-profits they've supported

over the years are feeling the financial pinch of the current economic downturn, the Community Foundation recognized this was a perfect opportunity to put together a free seminar that would offer advice and tips from Bay Area fundraising experts.

Sara DuBois, Director of Development of the East Bay Community Foundation suggested that "fundraising is really all about relationships." She acknowledged times are tough, but recommended being pro-active and going to donors to maintain a relationship even if the money is not there now. "Don't treat donors like an ATM - keep them in the loop with e-mail and newsletters." She also suggested seeing if there are other non-profits to partner with to increase efficiency and for larger organizations, bequests a good option for donors who can't give now.

"It's definitely a time to go out of your way to thank donors and to develop a sense of urgency - why it's important to give now," said Jan Berckefeldt, Executive Director of the Maybeck Foundation.

One tip offered by Linda Peterson, a Communication Consultant with Peterson, Skolnick & Dodge is to hone your story to its absolute essence, "say what you do and why it matters." She also suggested emphasizing donor needs that only donors can fill and reiterated the notion of cultivating relationships. She had the audience in stitches with rules of engagement regarding the courtship of a potential donor.

The one thing all the panel experts agreed and joked upon was the over-used phrase "in today's tough economic times," and suggested instead emphasizing the importance of continuing support.

Orinda Council Supports 55% Threshold for Local Tax Measures

By Andrea A. Firth

The biggest financial challenge facing Orinda is how to fund the City's \$120 million in infrastructure needs—this is no secret. Residents regularly dodge potholes and for two years running Orinda's roads have had the distinction of being named the worst in the Bay Area. Twice the City has placed infrastructure bonds before the voters and failed to obtain the required 2/3 approval by a narrow margin. City Council, staff, and Task Force volunteers continue to strategize ways to obtain grants and additional revenue sources to address the infrastructure needs, and the problem persists. Most recently the Council worked the legislative angle.

At the February 17th City Council meeting, the Council adopted a resolution in support of a bill authored by California State Assembly Member Jared Huffman that would amend the State Constitution and lower the voter

threshold to 55% for special local taxes. Currently, local taxes require a 2/3 voter approval—a bar that is often difficult to reach. [Local taxes used to finance school facility improvements are an exception and require a 55% voter approval—a change approved through Proposition 39 in 2000.]

According to the Mayor Sue Severson, the Contra Costa Mayors Conference has begun to expand its advocacy efforts. Civic leaders cross the County have been encouraged to take a more active role in support of legislation that will enable cities to retain greater local control for priorities that they have established. To that end the Council considered and adopted the resolution in support of lowering the voter threshold, however the Council's action will not amend the 2/3 requirement—that will require approval by the State legislature and a statewide vote.

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