

LAMORINDA WEEKLY



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Wednesday, March 18, 2009



Miramonte High School teacher Campbell Hunter and Acalanes student Deanna Jarquin join local district teachers and administrators in downtown Lafayette to protest recent termination notices Photos Andy Schreck

Budget Cuts Prompt Pink Slip Protests

By Andrea A. Firth

The passage of the State budget last month clarified the fiscal picture for public school districts across Lamorinda, and improved the outlook somewhat. Unfortunately, it was not sufficient to enable the districts to avoid issuing preliminary notices of termination—pink slips—to several teachers and other certificated and classified staff.

Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) notified certificated staff representing 40.6 full-time positions—an improvement from the original list of 92.4 fulltime positions facing layoffs when the District's 2009-10 revenue deficit was projected to be over \$5 million. In addition, about 17 classified employees (16.75 fulltime equivalents) may be on the list to receive layoff notices after the

AUHSD Board meets on March 18.

Far fewer certificated and classified staff faced termination in Lamorinda's kindergarten through 8th grade districts. However, teachers and staff working in the elementary and middle schools in the areas of environmental science, libraries, technology, music, physical education, and maintenance are at risk of losing jobs.

As school administrators continue to parse through the fine print, many aspects of the State budget remain unknown and to be determined. "In some ways it's a moving target," stated Kathy Bell, chief business official for the Moraga School District (MSD). "Everyday we are getting new information."

The California Legislature's 2009 Budget Act is

contingent on the passage of several propositions on the May ballot, some of which directly impact school funding such as establishing a Rainy Day Fund, amending Proposition 98, and borrowing from future State lottery profits. When and how much money districts will receive from the American Recovery Investment Act (a.k.a. the stimulus package) is also unclear.

Each of the Lamorinda school districts anticipates receiving money and eagerly awaits a final read on the amount and date of arrival, yet none of the districts are quite ready to bank on it. The risk of the monies being siphoned off by the State before reaching the district level remains a possibility.

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Cut it Back so the Trucks Can Get Through

By Andrea A. Firth



Pictured are MOFD Firefighter Julie Mulliken and Engineer Mike Murphy with their engine in a tight spot Photo M. Mentink

Vegetation growth such as trees, shrubbery, and weeds that block or curtail the passage of emergency vehicles on the narrow streets and roadways throughout Canyon, Moraga, and Orinda is a common problem, according to Fire Marshal Mike

Mentink. "[The vegetation overgrowth] can damage the emergency vehicles and really slows you down," states Mentink.

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) recently responded to a fire in a two-story residential structure up a narrow road in Canyon. Ladders stored on the outside of two of the MOFD trucks had brackets broken by overhanging vegetation, and the ladders fell to the roadside before the trucks reached the home. In this case, the MOFD firefighters were able to contain the fire with the equipment on hand and no one was hurt, but there is a real potential for the emergency effort to be impaired, explains Mentink.

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Lamorinda's Youth Baseball Season Begins

By Lucy Amaral

Mother Nature cooperated quite nicely, offering up a sunny day for Lamorinda's youth baseball Opening Day on March 7. Most of the fields may not have been play-ready, but there were no damp spirits as teams were announced, anthems were played and first pitches were thrown. Boasting hundreds of boys and girls in each league, Moraga Baseball Association (MBA), Orinda Baseball Association (OBA), and Lafayette Little League (LLL), started their seasons off with festivals, jamborees and thunderous applause.

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