

# Life in LAMORINDA

## Serving More Than Sandwiches at the Huckleberry Café

By Cathy Tyson



Trainee Dina Greenburg, working in the Huckleberry kitchen

Photo Cathy Tyson

"The curried chicken salad sandwich is very popular, also the turkey, avocado and bacon. Our brownies are delicious – very chocolate and chewy," said Jacquie Allen, Program Director of the Huckleberry Café-To-Go. Although the food is terrific, this small business actually focuses on training the staff. "I am just so proud of the clients. We have between ten and fifteen clients working in the kitchen – a great crew."

Dina Greenburg, pictured above, is a trainee in the kitchen; she

says that she loves working there and it has helped her with her cooking skills at home. She considers it her job and is happy to receive a pay check while being trained.

"Without a generous outpouring of public support from the Lafayette Juniors, the Lafayette Community Foundation and many, many others none of this would have been possible," said Allen, referring to the recently opened catering kitchen. It took over a year to get the kitchen installed, due to sanitation regulations and other requirements

in the Future's Explored building just behind Chow on Wilkinson Lane.

Only open since December of 2008, the Huckleberry Café-To-Go provides valuable vocational training as well as food safety, sanitation and food service skills. It's the only commercial kitchen in the area that is staffed by developmentally disabled adults. With an emphasis on fresh, healthy ingredients it's easy to see why their products are so popular. The group provides lunch four days a week to the students of the Meher School in Lafayette and delivers lunches to some offices in the area.

Futures Explored, a private non-profit day program also provides supported employment, helping clients get and hold paying jobs. They have a job developer and job coaches to provide support - some of the clients work at Safeway and Round Table.

In addition to the Huckleberry Café-To-Go, Futures Explored runs the Nifty Thrift Shop on Golden Gate Way in Lafayette, also a vocational training site for adults with developmental disabilities.

Program Director Jacquie Allen is no stranger to catering and food service, she had previously worked at Las Trampas, where she supervised clients that prepared and sold baked goods at the BART station. The Huckleberry Café is the manifestation of her vision of a

meaningful life for all. She feels many people with disabilities want to work and earn a paycheck, as we all do. "I have been in the field for almost thirty years and it still makes me happy when I see someone master a skill or hold down a job out in the community. Huckleberry Café-To-Go is just another way to help people achieve their dreams."

Go to [www.futures-explored.org](http://www.futures-explored.org) and click on Huckleberry Café to find a menu and ordering information, or call (925) 284-3240 x224 for Jacquie Allen.

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## County Cuts Hit Sheriff's Office, 4-H Program Given Reprieve

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At the March 31 meeting, the Board unanimously approved to fully fund through fiscal year end the University of California's Cooperative Extension (UCCE), which runs Contra Costa County's 4-H program.

Lafayette resident Scott Compton, who has been involved in 4-H for ten years, was surprised by the decision.

"Somehow the local 4-H program dodged the budget bullet for now," Compton said. "In light of the dire condition of economies – from worldwide to U.S., California to Contra Costa County – it was expected that the 4-H program would be impacted. And seeing that at the same Supervisors meeting, police and medical programs were under the knife, I was totally surprised that 4-H survived immediate cuts."

In a letter to 4-H Community members, Acting County Director Janet Caprile explained how the decision to fully fund UCCE through the end of June will "allow time for the Board to try to find a reasonable level of funding to keep us operating for the next fiscal year (July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010)." The County currently pays 12 percent of the 4-H Program's annual budget.

"It is not over yet, but the situation looks more hopeful," she said. Caprile credits the decision to

grassroots efforts made by volunteers. "We would not have even this glimmer of hope and opportunity without the strong show of support from the many who wrote letters, made phone calls, and spoke at the hearings," she said. "The room was packed at both the March 17 and March 31 hearings with supporters who spoke eloquently on the importance of Cooperative Extension in Contra Costa County."

The UC Cooperative Extension's Youth Development Program (YDP) administers the 4-H program with support from the county, according to Compton, who has served as a liaison between clubs and the Cooperative Extension.

"The local office provides a central point for dissemination of information, coordinating county-wide activities, liaison with state/national organization, and meeting space. I believe that the county provides the building and funds staffing. But the overall program is that of UC," he said.

In Compton's opinion, every youth and adult learns from 4-H. "Many not familiar with the program think of 4-H as an animal-raising club, as it originally was," he said. "But there is so much more. Youth members pretty much govern their clubs. Local participation and

community service are a significant part of the program."

Although further cuts are anticipated, Supervisor Gayle Uilkema said the Board will continue to look for alternative means of funding, keeping a close eye on where the federal stimulus money will go within the state.

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