

Acalanes High School • Bentley School • Burton Valley • Camino Pablo • Campolindo • Contra Costa Jewish Day School • Del Rey • Donald L. Rheem • Glorietta • Happy Valley • Joaquin Moraga

# Lamorinda Schools

Lafayette Elementary • Los Perales • Miramonte • Orinda Academy • Orinda Intermediate • Saklan Valley School • Sleepy Hollow • Springhill • Stanley Middle • St. Perpetua School • Wagner Ranch

## SCHOOL CALENDAR

### School Governing Board Meetings

**Acalanes Union**  
High School District  
Board Room AUHSD Office  
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette  
Wednesday, Oct. 21, 2009 at 7:30pm

**Lafayette School District**  
LAFSD Office  
3477 School Street, Lafayette  
Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2009 at 7 pm

### Moraga School District

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate  
School Auditorium  
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga  
Tuesday, Oct. 17, 2009 at 7:30 pm

### Orinda Union School District

OUSD Office  
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda  
Monday, Nov. 9, 2009 at 4:00pm

Submit stories to  
[schooldesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:schooldesk@lamorindaweekly.com)

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**GROUP TOURS - 8:30-9:30 AM**  
October 16th - All School Tour  
November 6th - Middle School Tour  
November 13th - Kindergarten Tour

**PRESCHOOL PREVIEW DAYS - 8:45-9:45 AM**  
Bring your little one and join our class!  
November 11th

## OPEN HOUSE

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> • 2:00-4:00 PM**

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## "Odyssey" Offers Mind-Expanding Explorations

By Lou Fancher

**O**dysey of the Mind (OOM), an international educational program involving 26 countries, is a journey led by children. This innovative team activity, like any sport, requires agility, flexibility, dexterity and a dose of shrewd wisdom equal to Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, who used a giant wooden horse to win the Trojan War.

Unlike the infamous Greek battle, defeat is the farthest thing from the minds of the kids involved in OOM. Instead, teams of five to seven young people, organized into divisions by age, focus their ingenuity on tackling diverse problems with more than one answer. Teams bring their solutions to local, regional and finally, world competitions that celebrate the remarkable energy and vibrant minds of today's youth.

Started 25 years ago by Dr. Sam Micklus, a professor at Rowan University, OOM invites kindergarten through college age students to escape conventional education's fixed processes through mind-expanding explorations. Member organizations, often schools' gifted departments, community clubs or colleges and universities, sponsor local groups and oversee the coaching. Parents and teachers, captivated by the program, volunteer to lead the teams and judge the final competitions. In this case "lead" is a relative term, because OOM is firmly hands-on for kids, hands-off for adults. "Parents facilitate, but never direct the creativity of the kids," says Pin-Pin Wong, a parent with six years of coaching under her belt.

Each year, five "problems" are presented: Large Vehicle – sponsored by NASA and involving designing, building and operating a vehicle; Technical Performance – creating a contraption based on an artistic concept; Classics – transforming a classical item, such as bringing a painting to life; Structure – building a balsa and glue structure able to withstand tremendous impact; and Performance – a performance based on a theme. All teams pick from these five categories, meaning eight-year olds and eight-

teen-year olds wind up working on the same problems. "It's fascinating to see what happens," says Rich Render, a member of the Moraga Rotary Club that sponsors the Moraga teams.

Along with the vigorous pursuit of innovative solutions, the kids develop enduring friendships. Brainstorming sessions adhere to the no-idea-is-too-crazy rule. "You're always welcome to express your ideas," says Gwendolyn Tom, a sophomore at Campolindo High School. What's more, the five months of preparation before competition allows team members to gain confidence and trust their instincts.

"We can set long-term goals and actually achieve them," Colton Jang says, his tone concentrated, the look on his face joyous and proud. For Tom and Jang, and all the kids at an early informational session, the combination of freedom and investigation is clearly intoxicating.

Competition days are a well-organized festival of wild, intellectual creativity. Teams present their long-term work in 8-minute performances. They also face a spontaneous challenge, like naming things that hurt and what they hurt, or tying a rope in a loop and improvising with it. It's 8 minutes of the best young minds on display.

Natalee Bartak, a parent now active in recruiting and training new coaches, explains the participants' enthusiastic response to this part of the competition: "The kids become quick on their feet. They can be creative problem solvers on the spot because they've been doing it for months."

And isn't this the goal of education after all? Enabling students to use their minds, to support each other's efforts, to see possibility instead of pessimistic defeat in every obstacle? Life will throw obstacles – there will be armies with greater numbers – but for these OOM grads, there are no barriers, there are only opportunities to innovate.

For more information about Odyssey of the Mind, visit its web site at: [www.odysseyofthemind.com](http://www.odysseyofthemind.com).

## Red Ribbon Week:

## Three High Schools, Three Ways to Promote a Drug and Alcohol Free Environment

By Sophie Braccini

**W**ith a fatal incident that cost the life of a Lamorinda student last year, local high schools are focusing on all the possible sides of alcohol and drug prevention, offering a mosaic of actions during "Red Ribbon Week" – a traditional time in late October for schools to promote healthy and drug free living.

The three high schools each have a different way of fostering safe behaviors: Miramonte focuses on parents, as well as students, Campolindo proposes fun activities to the students, and Acalanes empowers students to talk to other students.

Acalanes High School will involve students in the process of managing the Red Ribbon week themselves. "Students talking to students is the best communication channel when discussing the dangers of drugs and alcohol," says Melody Howe Weintraub, the Parents' Club member in charge of Healthy Choices.

Last year the school's nurse, Dvora Citron, was able to secure a mini-grant and launch the Acalanes Health Council that's composed only of students. "Two dozens students joined last year and they are 60 this year," Citron says. "They are interested in promoting healthy programming on campus, they will be CPR trained and will learn intervention strategies."

The students are planning Red Ribbon Week exhibits at lunchtime and will be conducting an alcohol prevention bingo. "More than the information, what is important is that the students share with each other, and discuss how to act on their own values," adds Citron.

At Campolindo, the Healthy Choices committee headed by Renee Breber and Roxey Klein is planning two informative days for the students. "Tuesday the 27th and Thursday the 29th, student activities will be

offered in the Quad at lunch time," explains Breber.

The first activity will be a one-page quiz with facts and myths regarding drugs and alcohol use that will give students the opportunity to enter a raffle. Breber hopes that the students will discuss the quiz and its finding with their parents. "Studies have shown that the most influential people in the life of teens regarding substance abuse behavior are their parents, not their peers," she adds.

Campolindo is also planning an obstacle course where students wear a pair of "fatal goggles" – eyewear that simulates altered perception while intoxicated at various levels. During the week, parents will get information in the daily e-bulletin focused on one of this year's themes: "Lock Your Meds."

At Miramonte an important part of the week focuses on parents.

"We are organizing a Community Forum on Alcohol," explains Lynne Alper, who co-chairs Healthy Choices with Jaime Zaffanella. The forum – "Underage Drinking in Our Community – Myth and Reality" – will be held at the Miramonte Theater on Oct. 27 from 7 to 9 p.m., and will consist of a panel of five speakers who will address different angles of underage drinking and answer questions.

Miramonte principal Adam Clark, Orinda Chief of Police Bill French, Attorney Ted Cassman, who has expertise in liability, and Orinda's Jan Gurley, M.D. will address alcohol intoxication. Emily Justice, from the Center for Human Development, will talk about empowering parents to be more diligent, feeling more confident calling other parents, and saying "no."

Different programs will also be organized in the local elementary and middle schools.

## Lamorinda Schools Make Green by Going Green

By Jean Follmer

**F**rom Lafayette School District solar installations like those at Stanley Middle School and Burton Valley Elementary, to fluorescent light bulbs, electronic equipment and Caprisun wrapper recycling, Lamorinda schools are placing an increasingly stronger emphasis on being more earth-centered and "green" and saving money in the process.

Del Rey Elementary in Orinda added earth-conscious elements to its annual pumpkin patch, and for the past two years, students have been able to play with a giant "Earth" ball and watch solar bags float toward the sky fueled only by the heat of the sun.

A number of schools, including Donald Rheem Elementary in Moraga and Springhill Elementary in Lafayette, have recently completed construction of outdoor garden classrooms while other schools have enjoyed the riches of their gardens for many years. These gardens enable students to literally interact with the Earth through cultivation, nurturing and ultimately reaping the rewards of their work.

The Lafayette School District is embarking on a new effort titled "Team Green." The group is a collective effort between the District, the City of Lafayette, parents and citizens and will hold its first Green Summit at Springhill Elementary on Friday, Oct. 16.

Orinda Intermediate School Principal Michael Randall said

OIS has a Green Team of its own. The Green Team consists of two faculty members and a group of students and meets regularly during the lunch hour.

"The objective is to increase recycling and reduce waste," said Randall. The Green Team's efforts have resulted in revenue to the school and savings to the Orinda School District.

"As a result of their work last year, we received an awarded of \$1,200 from Wastebusters," said Randall, noting that recycling disposal costs much less than garbage disposal. As a result of OIS's successful recycling program, Randall said the District has seen a savings in overall waste disposal costs.

St. Perpetua School has started a Terracycle drink pouch recycling program. Terracycle pays its "brigades" to collect certain garbage-bound items and send them to Terracycle for recycling and reuse. Instead of ending up in a landfill, Caprisun and Honest Kids drink pouches will be sent to Terracycle and St. Perpetua will receive \$.02 per packet. Terracycle turns the packets into bags, backpacks and lunchboxes.

Lafayette parent Leslie Westphal has championed the effort and also plans to get the program running at Springhill Elementary.

Campolindo Social Studies teacher Caron Brownlee is the coordinator of the Lorax Club. "The Lorax Club generates rev-

enue here by recycling cell phones, toner cartridges, bottles, cans, and aluminum. The latter is collected every Friday and the two former ones are collected monthly. We have also generated revenue by participating in Waste Audits that grant prize money if the audit is successfully completed," Brownlee said.

Last year, Donald Rheem Elementary in Moraga won first place in the Bay Area in Walmart's "Kids Recycling Challenge." The school collected 295 60-gallon bags of used plastic bags and was awarded \$1,475 for the collection plus \$3,000 for the grand prize.

"Our intention is to use the money to expand or improve our playground," said Rheem Principal Elaine Frank. "We're also very involved in the (Contra Costa County) Wastebusters Program and used our \$1,200 (prize money) for the garden."

Lafayette Superintendent, Dr. Fred Brill, said both Lafayette and Springhill Elementary Schools would be running on solar power by Thanksgiving. Preliminary financial results are promising.

"Our rough estimates show about \$2,000 in savings at the two schools in the last month," Brill said. Brill recently requested an energy audit from PG&E to determine other ways the district could take steps to save money. The District plans to pursue a similar report with East Bay Municipal Utility District.

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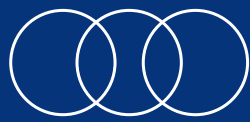
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