

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

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

# Lamorinda Schools

## SCHOOL CALENDAR

### School Governing Board Meetings

**Acalanes Union**  
High School District  
Board Room AUHSD Office  
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette  
Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2010 at 7:30 pm

**Lafayette School District**  
LAFSD Office  
3477 School Street, Lafayette  
Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2010 at 7 pm

**Moraga School District**  
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate  
School Auditorium  
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga  
Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2010 at 7:30 pm

**Orinda Union School District**  
OUSD Office  
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda  
Monday, Jan. 11, 2010 at 4:00pm

Please send story ideas to [schooldesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:schooldesk@lamorindaweekly.com)

## The Planet Protection Project A student-led green club at JM

By Sophie Braccini



Painted recycling containers Photo Kim Lockett

Protection Program) club started.

The first objective of the Club, that meets every other Wednesday at lunch time, is to eliminate styrofoam from lunch leftovers. "The students made a presentation during the PTA's November meeting that was very well received," remembers Lockett, "and the PTA promised to contact the vendors that supply hot lunch at the school to ask them to eliminate Styrofoam."

The next step is to get students to recycle in the right containers. "We have separate containers for the bottles and cans but the students can be lazy and if there are not enough different cans it all gets mixed up," says Monopoli. So with the help of the teachers, the students got new containers with transparent plastic bags so the students can see what goes where, and they painted the recycling containers with bright colors to raise awareness.

"It is a matter of education," says Lockett, "most of the recycling containers are getting contaminated at lunch time and the custodians are obligated to dispose of them with

the rest of the trash."

What is hopeful about this program is that many teachers are getting involved too, trying to federate the different green aspects that have been developing at JM. "We are trying to get gardening included, and to involve the 6th graders," says Core teacher Dawn Lezak. "She adds that this year the students are doing more in terms of group gardening and composting, and trying to reduce the waste at lunchtime."

In that same spirit, Monopoli and Hunger participated in December at a joint meeting with Stanley and OIS students who want to challenge their peers to a zero-waste lunch on Earth Day in April 2010. "It was fun to see all of the eco groups from each school," says Monopoli, "A lot of other kids are aware of these questions too and that made me happy." The student noted that other interesting projects are going on in the two other local middle schools, such as a project to eliminate plastic bottles.

Social Studies teacher Hillary Hoppock accompanied the students to the meeting. "It can be challenging to convince the students to recycle," she said, "we will use the daily video bulletin and give examples of what is compostable or recyclable, and explain how to bring a zero-waste lunch."

"We hope that the children will get a consistent message at home and at school," adds Lockett, "and with the students' leadership we will make this work."

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## Ask Dr. Harold

### "Lawnmower" Parents

By Harold Jules Hoyle Ph.D.

A couple of weeks ago I was conducting a training with a group of Catholic school principals. The subject of helicopter parents came up. I heard a new term when the superintendent said, "We call them lawnmower parents because the blades are much closer to the ground."

Helicopter or lawnmower parents are a concept I was first introduced to in an e-mail sent out to the faculty at Santa Clara University two years ago. The e-mail contained instructions on how to deal with parents of undergraduates who were following up on the assignments of their children. I would like you to think just for a moment about some of our patterns of interacting with our children. The principals discussed it and frankly they were of the opinion that we parents are doing too much for our kids.

So, are we doing too much for our kids?

In developmental psychology, the human being attempts to solve new problems using techniques that were successful in solving problems in the past. This process is important because through trial and error (that is right, I said error) we learn. The one-year-old throws his spoon/food/plates on the floor because it gets your attention. If you attend to the child only when they make noise or throw things then you are using behavioral psychology to teach your child to do those very activities that you do not like. If we keep our children from making mistakes we are doing too much.

In the recent research on brain development, we have learned that on average, boys' brains develop their motor areas more quickly than their language areas. We also know that on average, language areas of boys' brains can develop one or more years behind those of girls. In his book *Boys Adrift*, Dr. Leonard Sax notes that boys opt out of school because their brains are not ready for the curriculum that has made its way from 1st and 2nd grade into kindergarten.

Part of why we parents do not understand why boys are opting out, is that many of us were raised when the world decided that avoiding poor self-esteem was the main goal of psychological development. I do not argue that it is better to feel good about yourself, but the breakdown happens when we equate failing or struggling at a task with low self-esteem. That is just not how it works. I recently took my 15 year old nephew surfing. It was cold, big, stormy surf. One of his favorite moments was, as he put it, "getting absolutely obliterated by a big set."

Here is how it works. If I am a first grader and I can't sound out a blend to save my life, I look around the world and find something that I am good at and I build positive self-esteem around that. Kids look around and say, "Hey I am not a classroom kid, I am a playground kid." The majority of our kids are positive self-esteem-building machines. When we do so much that they never fail, we are doing too much.

One of the principals at our training talked about the drop-off table at his school and how he was going to get rid of it. He felt that the parents dropping off lunches and clothes and projects and homework was contributing to the lack of initiative, creativity, and responsibility he was seeing in his high school students. His opinion was that if the child goes hungry or has to share with other kids to get their lunch, then they will build the type of out-of-the-box thinking that only a hungry kid can come up with. When we make our kids' lives easier and take away their creativity and initiative, we are doing too much.

I have to getting going now as I forgot to make my son's lunch and need to go drop it off.....all that tough talk starts in January, you know!



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## 8th Grade Poetry Winner

Submitted by Stacy Swain

Earlier this year Molly Swain, an 8th grade student at Orinda Intermediate School (OIS), submitted a poem to a contest that was held for young poets. Swain's poem was selected from thousands of entries as one of the top ten in her grade division. The contest was held for all students in grades K-12. The top ten poets in each di-

vision (grades K-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12) will each receive special recognition in the poetry anthology "A Celebration of Poets." Each top ten winner receives a complimentary copy of the anthology and a \$50 savings bond. Poems are selected for their literary merit, creativity, and social significance. Creative Communication in

Logan, Utah, sponsors this contest to offer a creative outlet that honors our youth. Creative Communication also awards over \$12,500 each year in Language Arts Grants to schools to further encourage young people's writings. Teachers, parents, and students alike have been pleased with the contest.

## Schools Go Solar



Lafayette Superintendent Dr. Fred Brill flipped the switch during a ceremony at Lafayette Elementary School on December 7th, bringing that school's solar panels on-line. Solar panels are now in operation at Stanley Middle School, Burton Valley Elementary and Lafayette Elementary. Springhill Elementary will be up and running within weeks and plans are currently underway to install panels at Happy Valley Elementary.

J.Follmer

Photo Jean Follmer

## Girl Scout Leader-Daughter Tea

Submitted by Janet Riley



Pictured above, in back row: Tory Wong, Linden Brentano, Thama Brentano, Haley Lewis, Lindsey Lewis, Elizabeth Lewis, Danielle Albo; in front row: Marina Allen, Emily Nenni, Hannah Tennant, Jamie Riley and Emma Smith.

Photo provided

Miramonte choral members Marina Allen, Emily Nenni, Hannah Tennant, Jamie Riley, Emma Smith, and Danielle Albo sang at the Orinda-Moraga Girl Scout Association Annual Leader-Daughter Tea. Leaders and their daughters

come together every year to be honored for all their work and to enjoy each other's company. This year's theme was "Let it Snow." Cookies and sandwiches prepared by Troop 977, all juniors at Miramonte, were enjoyed by all.

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