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December 9, 2009



By Sophie Braccini

Photos:  
 Left: Snowman by Will Grubbs of Moraga Photo A. Firth  
 Right: Haley and Tommy Richards playing with their first Moraga snow Photo Sophie Braccini

A small face peers through an early morning window and an excited voice whispers, "Momma, it snowed!" Not what one might expect to hear in our fair cities, but on Monday, December 7th, much of Lamorinda awoke to snowy white yards. Adults and kids alike seemed to enjoy the frosty morning. Snowmen rose from the ground, icy snowballs were gleefully thrown, and early morning walkers and joggers enjoyed views of glistening hillsides and snow-dusted

trees. For a couple of hours, Lamorinda was transformed into a lovely winter wonderland.

According to the National Weather Service, it snowed as low as 360 feet above sea level in the wee hours of Monday morning. "We typically get snow on Mount Diablo (elevation 3849 feet), but this is most unusual," said the forecaster. Moraga's elevation is 725 feet, Lafayette is at about 400 ft, and Orinda has an average 800-foot elevation.

Lamorinda occasionally sees snow falling in the winter, but it rarely stays on the ground for long. Janet Foreman, who has lived in Moraga for 45 years, remembers only one other snowy day, when her children were in first grade. "It was in 1972," Foreman recalls. "I remember that the kids wanted to save half of the snow to play in later, but of course, it didn't work." This year, Foreman's grandchildren got their first chance to play in the snow.

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## Encinal Ends Mats' Unforgettable Playoff Run

By Alex Crook



James King with the touchdown catch, tying the score at 14

Photo Jordan Fong

Miramonte varsity football finished the 2009 regular season at 4-6, which is usually not enough for a team to stake its claim in the post-season. However, John Wade's Matadors managed to enter the NCS Playoffs and proved they belonged there. 12th seeded Miramonte defeated Novato High on Saturday November 28th, to qualify for the third round where they faced top-ranked Encinal on Friday, December 4.

The Mats did not want a repeat of the last three years, when they lost to the Novato High Hornets two out of the three. The Mats got their revenge, shutting out the host Hornets 17-0.

Miramonte started lighting up the scoreboard in the first quarter when junior fullback John Coupin punched the ball in from a yard out to put the Mats up 7-0.

As time expired in the first half, Mats junior kicker Anthony Piganelli hit an impressive 48-yard field goal as both teams went into the locker room with the visiting Matadors ahead, 10-0.

Novato came out firing in the third quarter, but Miramonte regained possession and would add one more touchdown when senior linebacker PJ Gabrielli ran it in from a yard out. For the final 53 seconds of the ball game Miramonte milked the clock down to zero.

... continued on page 27

### Every Christmas Needs a Scrooge

By Lou Fancher



There may be 3,000 productions of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol playing at the same moment across the continent, but there is one, just one, playing at the Town Hall Theatre (THT) in Lafayette. And each night, after Scrooge, the musical retelling of the classic Victorian tale is finished, that particular performance is over, ... read on page 15

### Q&A with MOFD Chief Randall Bradley

By Lucy Amaral



Randall Bradley was sworn in as Moraga-Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) new Fire Chief on November 18th. He joins the District at a time of economic challenges and political controversy. Here, he offers insight into his experience, his goals for the District and his response to some of those concerns. Why take this job?

... read on page 24

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# Lafayette

Public Meetings	
<b>City Council NEW Meeting Location Lafayette Library and Learning Center Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd</b>	
<b>City Council</b>	Monday, December 14, 7:00 pm Lafayette Library and Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd
<b>Planning Commission</b>	Thursday, December 17, 7:00 pm Community Center, Manzanita Room, 500 St Mary's Road
<b>Design Review</b>	Tuesday, December 22, 7:00 pm Community Center, Manzanita Room, 500 St Mary's Road
<b>Circulation Commission</b>	Tuesday, January 19, 7:00 pm Lafayette Library and Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements  
City of Lafayette: <http://www.ci.lafayette.ca.us>  
Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.lafayettechamber.org>

The City of Lafayette Senior Services Commission is soliciting citizens of any age for the current open position on the commission. Residency within Lafayette is not a present requirement but zeal for enhancing the well being of older adults is. The commission meets on the 4th Thursday monthly from 3:00 – 5:00 PM and ancillary committee work is also entailed. Call 284-5050 Lafayette Senior Services.

## • Police Report •



**Feeling No Pain, 11/26/09** The suspect was clocked doing over 100 mph on Highway 24 near the St. Stephen's exit. The erstwhile dangerous thrill seeker was arrested for speeding and driving under the influence of alcohol. She was later released to a sober friend at the Lafayette Police Department. The racecar was towed from the scene.

**Lock the Car, 11/21/09** When the victim returned to his parked car on N. Thompson Road, he discovered some contents were missing. A thief opened the door of the unlocked car and made away with a camera, a key fob and two bags with contents valued between \$800-\$900.

**Theft from Vehicle, 11/25/09** An unknown suspect gained access to the victim's vehicle on Hidden Valley Road by rudely smashing a window with an unknown object. Mr. Smash and Grab managed to lumber away with a variety of treasures: \$20 in change, a car club and a season's pass to a Lafayette theatre. Be wary of theatre patrons paying for drinks with change and carrying a club.

**Stick Up by Zip Lock, 11/27/09** A white male entered Bank of the West on Mt. Diablo Boulevard and presented a semi-automatic handgun to the bank tellers. The robber demanded they fill two plastic Zip Lock bags with cash. Zip Lock took the cash and ordered everyone to the floor before heading out the back door in an unknown direction. A K-9 track for suspects ended with negative results.

## Downtown Plan Keeps Moving Forward

By Cathy Tyson

Lafayette's draft Downtown Strategic Plan (DSP) continues on its journey, and is now in the competent hands of the Planning Commission which is painstakingly deliberating district by district preparing comments that will ultimately go to the City Council. In addition, an environmental impact report (EIR) of the draft Plan is being prepared by an independent consultant; both are meant to keep the process moving forward toward the adoption of a final plan.

Preparing a framework for long term future development doesn't happen overnight. As they clarify and listen to public input, the Planning Commission is well aware that nothing will be decided upon until the EIR and

Economic Analysis are available and reviewed. The task at hand is to dig into the nitty gritty details of the draft Plan and prepare a list of recommendations for the City Council.

Perhaps that's why the last meeting had a much friendlier tone and was decidedly less argumentative than DSP meetings of just a few months ago.

To expedite the task at hand, staff has clarified each district of the DSP by dividing it into two sections: the existing General Plan and the draft DSP to identify key differences. Oddly enough, like differing residents - there are sections where staff has two different points of view. These are complex issues and a variety of factors play a part. Even staff couldn't come

to agreement – so both sides of the argument are spelled out, and the issues opened up for public comment.

The Planning Commission meeting focused on controversial height issues. Planning and Building Manager Niroop Srivatsa suggested that building heights in the downtown retail district should be allowed to 35' with the ability to go to 43' with conditions. A staff report best sums it up, "The downtown retail district is the heart of the Downtown and should be the district that allows greater intensity of uses, density and height. It should not be a large district in area or length; rather it should be compact and walkable...the goal of protecting views of the hills should be balanced with provid-

ing the right environment and tools for the development of pedestrian oriented retail uses and housing."

Srivatsa also encouraged the Commission to treat Lafayette Circle gently and carefully to limit development due to the quieter, smaller street.

Commissioner Thomas Chastain hit the nail on the head when he asked staff how to put into a Specific Plan the nuance particular to a site - especially without an actual project at hand.

"Lay down a vision to talk about preservation of views and clarify what that means, list important design guidelines – like views or setbacks. It requires a lot of analysis and preparation; it's crafted to be more of a guide," said Srivatsa.

## Notorious Home for Sale

By Cathy Tyson

bedroom, three-plus bath home in Hunsaker Canyon is for sale. The home could be the bargain of the century. For residents looking for a spectacular, very private 6,200 square foot Italian villa on over thirteen acres with commanding views, this could be just the ticket.

"Between the murder and the location (up a narrow one lane road) it would take a special person to buy this house" said Cathy Schultheis, a Lamorinda realtor. Some might consider it a bit of a bargain – it's huge, has an approved federal winery license, vineyards, four fireplaces, game room and more. For the same asking price, \$3,998,000 there's a slightly larger, 6,488 foot, home available in Lafayette, but it's situated on slightly less than half an acre, closer in to town.

According to California Civil Code section 1710.2, deaths on a property must be disclosed for three years. Since

It was more than four years ago that Pamela Vitale, wife of defense attorney and television legal analyst Daniel Horowitz, was brutally murdered in the entry way of a mobile home the couple was living in while they built their dream home nearby. Scott Dyleski, a 16-year-old neighbor at the time

of the incident, was found guilty of first degree murder and was sentenced to life without parole.

The home was completed and, according to Horowitz, has been occupied for over two years. The mobile home where the incident occurred is long gone, and the luxurious four

it's been just over four years, technically the realtor handling the transaction doesn't necessarily have to mention it. However, according to Tom Pool, Spokesman for the California Department of Real Estate, "Agents have a duty to disclose all material facts."

A laborer with a local contracting firm working on the home at the time of the murder who wished to remain anonymous said, "All of the guys were creeped out. They kept referring to, 'una fantasma,'" a ghost in Spanish.

Already on the market for 121 days, this could be the perfect Christmas gift for a motivated buyer. Interested parties should know this is a gated property, so don't plan on stopping by if in the Burton Valley neighborhood. (Repeated calls to Peggy Cortez, the listing agent with J. Rockcliff Realtors, were not returned by press time.)

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## Condo Developments on Hold

By Cathy Tyson



View of vacant lot that will be four buildings housing sixty luxury condominiums behind the Veterans Memorial Hall. Photo Cathy Tyson

Wondering what the large bulldozed lot, behind the Veterans Memorial Hall, will one day be? It's a condominium project, The Woodbury, waiting to be developed, but stalled due to the scarcity of commercial lending. That and Lafayette Park Terrace, another proposed condominium development near Blodgett's Abbey carpet on Mt. Diablo Court, are riding out the current tough lending environment.

After years of expensive changes to the original 32 unit Lafayette Park Terrace project, bringing it down to a revised 18 units, developer Bruce Torquemada, a partner in Lafayette Properties, LLC has declared the project on hold. "Just no money out there," he said. He described the process as frustrating and quite expensive.

"We tried to please every-

one," describes Torquemada, "the project was built down into the hill with parking underground, very spacious – a quality development." He even had several buyers asking to pre-buy units. It was a shame since the city needs affordable and senior housing, not to mention the tax revenue that the project would have brought, opined Torquemada.

After all the reductions in size, at 18 units, it just didn't pencil out. The process itself added considerably to the cost. For example, prior to final approval story poles were erected four times over a number of years, at \$12,000 per set up, to demonstrate roof heights, view corridors and more. Adjacent to the would-be building are two existing apartment buildings. Lafayette Properties, LLC still owns the property.

John Fraser, Project Man-

ager of The Woodbury said, "No news, we're in a holding pattern, waiting for banks to get back into the market." Originally eighty luxury condominium units were planned at the site of the former India Palace, but the developer requested a change to sixty units, because market research indicated potential buyers preferred larger, more spacious units. As part of negotiations with the city, eighteen off-site low income units will be provided.

The revised project will have four buildings with between nine and twenty-one units per building and 164 parking spaces. The total square footage of the buildings has not changed, but was reorganized to provide roomier condominiums. When eventually completed, the Woodbury will be much better looking than a fenced-off vacant lot.

## Put Your Money Where Your House Is

By Sophie Braccini



Mayor Don Tatzin came to the Plaza for the official launch of the campaign Photo Andy Schreck

Early in the morning on December 1st, a team composed of Terry Ring (Ring Construction), Steve Palsa (Minuteman Press), JoAnne Archer (Sew Fine Interiors), and Jay Lifson, CEO of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, got together at the Plaza Park on the corner of Moraga Road and Mt Diablo Boulevard to erect a huge shopping bag, cheerfully adorned with a bright sun and decorated with the Chamber's new slogan, "Put your money where your house is." Later that day, dozens of Lafayette business owners came to the Plaza for the official launch of the campaign.

"We haven't lost any business in Lafayette during these tough economic times," stated Chamber CEO Jay Lifson, "we have our community to thank for that. They understood the idea behind 'Try

Lafayette First' and supported us. Now we want to achieve a new level of involvement from our business community," Lifson explained, in order to keep shopping dollars circulation locally.

Residents are invited to pick up a free "key to the city's businesses" at the Chamber of Commerce at Lafayette Circle or at the Lafayette bookstore at Mt Diablo Blvd. Presenting the key at participating merchants will get shoppers special discounts and offers.

Among other benefits to key holders, the Lafayette Gallery will give free holiday cards to those who purchase items of \$50 or more; Clocks Etc. will give out a free hand-crafted ornament with purchase of \$30 or more; and Lamorinda Music will give \$10 off every purchase of \$100 or more.

The Chamber counted 50

participating businesses as of the campaign's launch, and expects that many more will join; dozens of "keys" were distributed right away. "There is no more convenient and greener way to shop," said Mayor Don Tatzin, who came to the Plaza on the 1st, "please continue to shop local and participate in this campaign, we need to keep our businesses going and the city will do its part."

The wood structure was removed from the Plaza on the 8th and, weather permitting, may be seen in front of Orchard Nursery.

For more information about the campaign go to [www.trylafayettefirst.com](http://www.trylafayettefirst.com) or visit the Chamber of Commerce office at 100 Lafayette Circle, # 103.

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# Civic News Moraga



## Public Meetings

<b>Town Council</b>	Monday, December 14, 7:30 pm Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo
<b>Planning Commission</b>	Thursday, December 17, 7:30 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
<b>Design Review</b>	Tuesday, December 22, 7:00 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
<b>Liaison</b>	Friday, December 11, 8:00 am Fire Station, 1280 Moraga Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements  
Town of Moraga online: <http://www.ci.moraga.ca.us>  
Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.moragachamber.org>

## • Police Report •



**Taxi driver checked, 11/29/09** A taxi service picked up a customer in Walnut Creek and drove to the requested destination – a residence in the Rimer Drive area. Customer attempted to pay with a credit card. Unfortunately the card was declined, so customer attempted to pay with a personal check. Company policy dictates no checks – still the rider handed over the check and exited the car, heading to the home. Officers attempted to contact the customer at the residence but no one would answer the door. Now the cops and the taxi service know where the rider with the checkered past lives.

**All gassed up and somewhere to go, 11/28/09** The driver of a gray Subaru wagon pumped gas into his or her vehicle at Moraga Auto Care, then proceeded to

drive off with the nozzle still in the gas tank. The nozzle and hose were torn off the pump and were last seen with the vehicle heading eastbound towards Moraga Road. Estimated value of nozzle and hose - \$1200. Awfully generous, “gift with purchase.”

**Too much underage holiday cheer, 11/27/09** An 18-year-old was home from college at an off the record Ivy league school and hosted a party for his underage pals. Everyone was having fun until the cops came at 10:30 to break up the party and cite the fun-loving and wicked smart host that this reporter knows.

**Bike found, 11/25/09** A Rheem shop owner found a bicycle behind his business at 7:20 in the evening. One of his employees mentioned that was in the same location the day before. The bike was taken to the Moraga police department as found property. The perfect Christmas gift, get your bike back.

## Terry Wolff Stratton

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## Approval of Moraga Specific Plan Delayed

By Sophie Braccini

The approval by the Town Council of the Moraga Center Specific Plan and Housing Element that was scheduled for the end of 2009 has been delayed until January 2010 due to the Town’s desire to build a consensus with both residents and the property owners. New language is being added to meet the desiderata of the main property owner, but some residents are concerned about the consequences of the proposed new development on traffic as well as on the semi-rural character of the town.

The Town Council meeting December 2nd turned out to be a review of the plans and a time for the public to comment. On November 30th, the Planning Commission had postponed its recommendations since new elements had been given to them that very morning and they hadn’t had time to review them. “It’s like drinking from a fire hose,” said Planning Commissioner Margaret Goglia, referring to the amount of information that they had to process in a short period of time, “and out of respect to the public, we need to allow more time to review the new elements.”

For residents who might not have followed the past year’s worth of discussion, it is indeed a lot to swallow. There are two main documents that are pending approval: the Housing Element for the Town of Moraga, that will allow the town

to meet its legal obligation to plan for affordable housing; and the Moraga Center Specific Plan, in which the Town has decided to locate all of this affordable housing, as well as completely revitalize and redesign the center of town.

A third document defines a 6-acre zone which would allow 20-dwelling units per acre, to be located in two possible sites in the Specific Plan area. This high housing density section is what the town has chosen to satisfy its affordable housing requirement, without having to prove that the dwelling units will in fact be affordable.

At the November 30th Planning Commission meeting, members of the public expressed concerns about the process: “We are not ready to accept this plan,” said resident Ferenc Kovac, who added that he felt the Specific Plan might change the quality of life in Moraga. Richard Scarpitti, who lives on Camino Ricardo, asked if more visual simulations of what the pear orchard would look like once developed could be included in the Plan.

Another major actor is the Bruzzone family, which owns most of the land in the Specific Plan area; they are often represented by their consultant, Dick Loewke. At the Planning Commission meeting, Loewke presented the property owner’s concerns. Among them

was the lack of implementation elements in the plan, and the risk that the trail along the creek might interfere with commercial development.

At the Council meeting two days later, after Loewke and Moraga’s Planning Director, Lori Salamack, met to work out their differences, new language was added to the plan. No implementation incentives were added, but the change effectively removed the creek-side trail. Jim Townsend, from the East Bay Regional Park District, spoke in favor of the previous version, “A trail is not designed to drive traffic to downtown retail,” he said, “it can lead there, but there should be a possible alternative as well.”

Both property owners, the Bruzzone family and the Chi family (which owns 14 acres of the total of 183), expressed overall satisfaction with the plan.

The main element that concerned some residents is a plan for up to 630 new units in the area between Moraga Way, Moraga Road and Camino Ricardo. “We’re standing with our toes over a precipice, with nobody to pull us back,” said Moraga resident J.D. O’Connor. “People who moved to Moraga didn’t move to Lafayette,” said Muriel Amsden, “we don’t have the shopping, then so be it, we are semi-rural. I don’t want to see

600 new units, and many people are not happy about this.” Amsden’s concerns also encompassed the impact on traffic.

Council Member Mike Metcalf asked Salamack to explain again how the town had reached the conclusion that the new development would not have a serious impact on traffic.

“Under current zoning, the undeveloped area of the specific plan could accommodate 366 single-family homes,” Salamack replied, “the traffic impact of developing at that density would be in fact higher than what we are proposing here.” Salamack’s demonstration is backed by traffic studies that show that senior condos, student housing, and multi-family residences generate much less out of town traffic than do single family homes.

In light of the public’s comments, the Council decided not to rush the approval of the documents and to wait until the beginning of next year. The Planning Commission will meet again on December – check our website for updates, [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com).

The documents referenced in this article can be found on the Town of Moraga’s website, [www.moraga.ca.us](http://www.moraga.ca.us).

**If you missed some of our coverage of this issue and want to know more, our articles are archived on-line:**  
<http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0308/Moragas-Housing-Element-Planning-Commission-raises-important-questions-for-future-development-in-Moraga.html>  
<http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0307/Moraga-Center-Specific-Plan-to-be-Tweaked-Before-Adoption.html>  
<http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0306/Moraga-Specific-Plan-Triggers-Traffic-Concerns-from-Neighboring-Cities.html>  
<http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0304/Specific-Plan-Approved-by-Moraga-Planning-Commission.html>

## Town to Pursue the Purchase of New Property

By Sophie Braccini



Vacant 331 Rheem Blvd., close to the Town Offices at 329 Rheem Blvd.

Photo Sophie Braccini

The Hacienda Foundation of Moraga has always wanted to see the town’s corporation yard (corp yard) leave the Hacienda de las Flores. For years now, maintenance equipment and vehicles belonging to the Town have been parked among the trees near the Pavilion, blocking access to the property from Moraga Road. On December 2nd, Foundation members saw a ray of hope as the Town Council voted unanimously to direct staff to continue the process of purchasing the property located at 331 Rheem Boulevard; to which both the corp yard and the Town’s public works employees could be

relocated.

“The project will serve a multiple purpose,” said Town Manager Mike Segrest in his presentation. “It will remove the corp yard from the Hacienda grounds and will allow this property to be developed as it was always intended; it will generate the cash necessary to proceed with the final remodel of the Town Hall at 329 Rheem; it will place the corp yard at an ideal location, close to the Town Hall, with a building that does not require additional modification; and it will finally allow the town to monetize other unused properties to pay for more critical needs.”

The financial feasibility of the project was of concern to some residents. “There is only one question,” asked Dale Walwark, can we afford it?” Barbara Simpson stated, “We can’t do it, we know we can’t; we have the potential, but we don’t have the money. Don’t raise everybody’s taxes to pay for your dreams.”

Segrest presented a financial plan that in essence proposes to swap two unused properties that belong to the town, to partially finance the new one. One of these two properties is located on Devin Drive, and the other is at the corner of Rheem and St Mary’s Road. The



Town's corporation yard entrance off Moraga Road

Photo Sophie Braccini

initial payment on 331 Rheem would be \$700,000 (with a remaining note of \$500,000 to be paid within 2 years), plus \$600,000 to remodel 329 Rheem. The total cost to the town would be \$2.34 million, which includes a 20-year loan with payments ranging between \$100,000 and \$120,000 per year. The owner of 331 Rheem could trade the \$500,000 note for some of the town’s unused properties; remaining properties would be sold.

The Hacienda Foundation, whose stated mission is to enhance, protect, and preserve the Hacienda de las Flores, came out strongly in favor of the project that supports

two of their major goals: To move town staff, and the corp yard, away from the Hacienda. “We’ve always asked to move the corp yard,” said Foundation President Judy Dinkle, “with improved access to the Pavilion we will be able to conduct dual events on the premises and increase the property’s revenue.” Vice-President Bob Reynolds added, “The Hacienda is a park and community center and should be used that way – the corp yard and staff are in the way of that. Removing the yard is essential, and a Moraga Road presence will improve the functionality of the facility.”

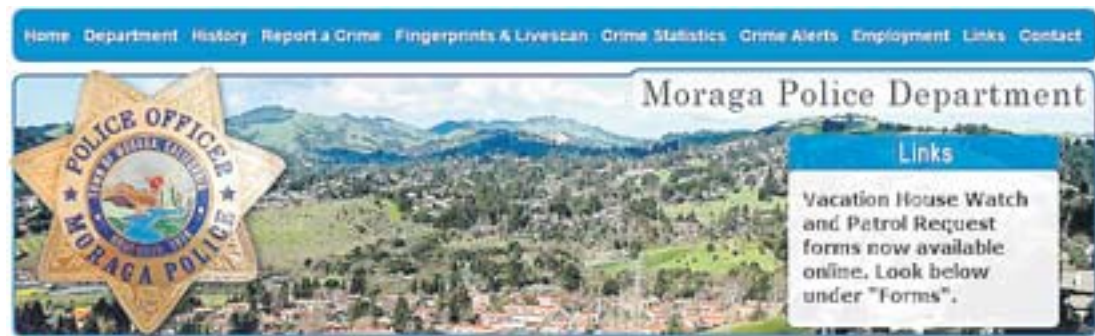
Council members asked if all

possible sites to which the corp yard could be transferred had been studied. Jill Mercurio, Moraga’s Public Works Director, indicated that there was no other location anywhere in town that would be more beneficial. “It may be a once in a lifetime chance,” said Council Member Howard Harpham.

The next step will be a thorough review of 331 Rheem and appraisal of all the properties. Staff will come back for more public comment and discussion, and the Council must approved the final purchase agreement.

## Moraga Police On-line

By Sophie Braccini



The Moraga Police web site provides links to the request forms

Heading out of town? The Moraga Police Department now offers residents an on-line service for requesting a “Vacation House Watch.” Got cause for alarm? You can also make a “Patrol Request.”

“If you are leaving your home for any length of time, or have a problem in your neighborhood that warrants special atten-

tion, simply fill out the form(s) on-line and press ‘submit,’” says Moraga Police Chief Bob Priebe. “You will receive a confirmation email that we received your request.”

To access this service, Moraga residents can go to <http://police.moraga.ca.us/links.php>. The forms are listed at the bottom of the page under the heading

“Forms.”

“We’ve had already a handful of demands for vacation house watch since we put the forms online a few days ago,” added Priebe at the beginning of the month.

Email your suggestions for how the Police Department can further improve its website to [police@moraga.ca.us](mailto:police@moraga.ca.us).

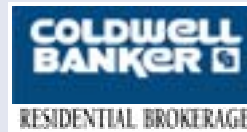


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## Saving Rheem Theatre

By Sophie Braccini



Jazmine Milbridge's Facebook page can be found online through "Don't let Rheem Theatre close" Screenshot

The announcement last month that the Rheem Theatre in Moraga could close due to declining sales spurred a community response of large magnitude. Called upon by Moraga Chamber of Commerce President Edy Schwartz, a group of about 15 residents gathered on December 3rd at the Hacienda de la Flores to brainstorm solutions.

Representing the Rheem Theatre were Mike Puri, who owns the property, and Jim Sheehan and Tom Peterson, who own and operate the business; all came on short notice. The Town of Mor-

aga was represented by Mayor Dave Trotter, Council Member Howard Harpham and Town Manager Mike Segrest. Residents representing diverse community groups in town were also in attendance, among them Frank Melón, General Manager of the Moraga Country Club; Kathy Ranstrom, an active school volunteer, Ellen Beans of the Moraga Citizens Network; Laura Olsen of Lamorinda Moms and the Moraga Juniors; George Fisher, the Moraga Movers; John Haffner, Moraga Parks and Recreation Foundation, Tim Farley of Saint Mary's Col-

lege; and Jazmine Milbridge, the Campolindo student who started the Facebook group, "Don't let Rheem Theater close."

"When people heard that the theater might close, it prompted an emotional reaction to a great loss," says Schwartz. Each participant to the meeting had been asked to reach out to his or her constituency and bring ideas both for the short and long term survival of the local landmark.

"This was a brain-storming session and many great ideas were proposed," Schwartz explains, "we will meet again shortly to discuss the implementation, but what came out of it was a feeling of a community getting together to save something that has historical meaning and is close to their heart, and I think that the property and business owners want to continue to work with us and make this succeed."

Among other ideas was to continue to have blockbusters in the main theater and to show more specialized films such as foreign movies in the smaller rooms during the week, to extend the last showing from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., to participate more in "community marketing," or to partner with local restaurants to have an economic package for dinner and a show. "We encourage people who are interested in the growth of our theater to come forward and join in this effort," said Schwartz. Those interested can send an email to Edy321@comcast.net.

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# Orinda

## Public Meetings

**City Council** Tuesday, December 15, 7:00 pm  
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

**Planning Commission** Tuesday, January 12, 7:00 pm  
*Tuesday, December 22 meeting is cancelled*  
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

**Caldecott Tunnel 4th Bore Construction Project Community Meeting** Thursday, December 10, 7:00 pm  
Founders Auditorium Orinda Community Center, 28 Orinda Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements  
City of Orinda: [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org)  
Chamber of Commerce: [www.orindachamber.org](http://www.orindachamber.org)

### Subscribe to Orinda's email notifications:

In an effort to improve city-wide communication, the City of Orinda has instituted a new email notification program that provides updates on important community alerts, emergency notifications, and City Council meeting notices. Register online at [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org) and click on 'subscribe to email notifications.' You will receive an email validation in your email inbox. Follow the instructions in the email to confirm your email address was added to the new electronic notification system.

### Orinda Tweets

City of Orinda updates are now available on Twitter. Visit [www.twitter.com/cityoforinda](http://www.twitter.com/cityoforinda). Become a follower and receive regular updates and city announcements.

## • Police Report •



**Car stolen, 11/30/09** A La Encinal resident left his car unlocked in the driveway. An unknown suspect found a valet key in the vehicle and used it, driving off with the black 2002 Toyota Camry. Surely the car owner is kicking himself right now.

**OIS graffiti, 11/28/09** A security guard was called to check on an alarm going off at Orinda Intermediate School. Upon arrival it was hard to miss the graffiti on many of the school's exterior walls. If your middle schooler came home with spray paint stains on his or her clothing, be suspicious.

**Dog kick payback, 11/30/09** A Grizzly Peak resident was walking his bearded collie on a leash in Orinda Community Park. Out of nowhere a German Shepherd attacked his dog. Collie owner yelled for

the owner of the Shepherd, meanwhile the Shepherd continued to attack the collie. In an effort to defend his dog, collie owner kicked the German Shepherd three times. Suddenly the collie owner was pushed to the ground from behind by a white male. "If you ever kick my dog again, I'll kick you're a--!", said the Shepherd owner who has short brown hair and an English or Australian accent.

**She's back, 12/01/09** Orinda's favorite frequent flyer is in trouble once again. A call came in for an unwanted guest at a home on Moraga Way. The 82-year-old father reported that his daughter was in front of his residence. She was belligerent and demanded entry into the house. Cops noticed her unsteady gait, slurred speech and watery eyes. Currently on probation, she's required not to drink alcohol. She was arrested for being drunk in public and violation of probation.

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## McCormick Appointed Orinda's Next Mayor

By Andrea A. Firth



Sue Severson receives recognition for her work over the past year as mayor from the newly appointed Mayor Tom McCormick

Photo by A. Firth

The Orinda Library Auditorium was packed for the City Council meeting on Tuesday, December 1, during which Tom McCormick was unanimously appointed Mayor of the City. McCormick takes over for Sue Severson who served as Mayor for the past year. Council Member Victoria Smith was named Vice Mayor for 2010; she previously served as Mayor in 2008.

At the start of the meeting, Orinda's many City Commissioners and volunteers were recognized and thanked by the Council and City staff for their many hours of service and the significant expertise and energy they bring to the City.

Following tradition, the Council members recognized the many accomplishments of Severson's mayoral tenure by taking turns reading through a resolution listing both serious and light-hearted achievements. Severson's 2009 Year of Action included the initiation of a Community Service/Clean-Up Day that drew over 300 volunteers, the implementation of new development guidelines for

residential projects, and the adoption of a Bike, Trail Walkway Master Plan for the City. Her delicious baked goods, boundless energy, and ability to work with limited sleep were also acknowledged.

While it was a difficult year financially for the City of Orinda,

which like many municipalities experienced a significant drop in revenue, Severson espoused fiscal prudence and led the Council in the difficult task of cutting over \$500,000 from the General Fund. Staff furlough days were instituted, but no layoffs were necessary. Be-

cause budget constraints cut funds to community activities like the July 4th celebration, Severson worked with the Council to establish activities to raise private dollars to meet these needs. The first event, the Kids' Triathlon held in November, raised over \$9,000 for the City, and a celebrity golf tournament is planned for July.

"Sue's time as Mayor is highlighted by the grace she brings as a presiding official," stated Council Member Steve Glazer. "She brings warmth, patience, understanding, and empathy to her work on the Council," he added. Vice Mayor Smith acknowledged Severson's work with the youth of Orinda along with her tenacity, hard work, and attention to detail. Council Member Amy Worth described Severson as a woman of action and commended her personal commitment to the needs and concerns of every citizen.

The new Mayor McCormick echoed his fellow Council members sentiments, noting that Severson had served as a good role model as mayor.



The Orinda Intermediate School Choir performed a medley of holiday songs at the Mayor's reception Photo A. Firth

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## Five Orinda Homes Recognized for Architectural Excellence

By Andrea A. Firth

As one of her last acts as Mayor, Sue Severson recognized five newly remodeled homes in Orinda with the 2009 Mayor's Award for Architectural Excellence. The award was established three years ago by then Mayor Steve Glazer to recognize residential designs that make an extraordinary contribution to the character and livability of the city's neighborhoods. Two Council members, Sue Severson and Tom McCormick, a member of the Planning Commission, Carlos

Baltodano, and a local landscape architect, Nora Harlow, judged the entries. The remodels were placed in two categories: major and minor projects. The winners are presented in the sidebar and before and after photos of many of the homes are posted on the Lamorinda Weekly website, www.lamorindaweekly.com.

A call for submissions for the 2010 architectural awards will be issued in late spring of next year.

... continued on page 14



39 Via Hermosa, Russ Rettig - Stan Nielsen, Nielsen Architects

Photos provided

## Orinda Historical Society Looks Back and Forward

By Andrea A. Firth



Orinda architect Bill Simpson

Photo by Kent Long



Orinda Theater owner Tom Peterson

Photo by Kent Long

About eighty locals gathered at the Orinda Community Church for the Orinda Historical Society's year-end holiday gathering and enjoyed a cocktail reception and catered dinner. To start off the evening, longtime Orinda residents Bobbie Landers and Dick Heggie were recognized with the Orinda Historical Society Awards for 2009 for their exceptional efforts to preserve Orinda's past for current and future generations.

The theme for the evening was Downtown Orinda, Yesterday & Tomorrow with presentations by local architect Bill Simpson and Orinda Theater's new owner Tom Peterson. Simpson, a resident of Orinda for 46 years, displayed a

compendious knowledge of the many development projects that have been proposed, and in some cases built, throughout Orinda's residential neighborhoods and downtown district. Simpson described the development of the BART station, Orinda Woods, and Theater Square and the architectural challenges associated with each project while presenting a trove of photos of the city from the past 40 years. Sharing his experience as part of the Orinda Association (OA) prior to the City's incorporation, Simpson noted, "We worked very hard on the OA, but many of the ideas did not come to pass."

... continued on page 8



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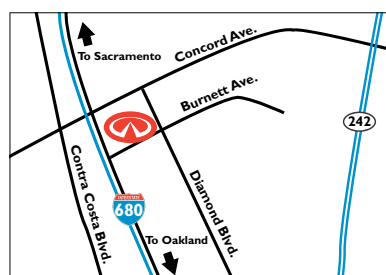
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9:40 a.m. Education for all ages  
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**Christmas Eve Services**  
4:00 p.m. Joy to the World (Children's Christmas Pageant)  
6:00 p.m. The First Noel (Candlelight Communion Service)  
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**LAMORINDA Community**

**Letters to the Editor**

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**email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com;** Regular mail: **Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570**

Editor:

What a wonderful front page photo with the Lamorinda area Mayors and story about the upcoming Holiday season on the Nov. 25th edition. Directly below is an article that highlights "Police Costs Becoming Unsustainable, Lafayette and Orinda Consider Alternatives."

The picture of three local Mayors tells the story, a catastrophic story on why Cities are experiencing revenue problems. Last I checked, the Lamorinda Loop is about 15 miles and can be easily covered by bicycle. Though the overall square miles of the area is a bit larger it's quite small overall. Let's start to add this up on what politicians fail to do for the people all over California and the US; reduce the size of government and reduce and or control expenses. Though articles are floating around to combine fire departments in the area, why not create a single (1) Lamorinda government body? Why does Lamorinda require three of the major functions in local government for such a small area? I'm sure this idea has been discussed before but no politician will stand up and fight for this worthy cause. Oh, I'm confident the pundits will say that such an initiative is impossible. When you look at all the pensions, offices, benefits, overtime (I could keep going), it's easy to see why Cities are out of money and then say let's tax the people and by the way, we are going to reduce services. Bottom line; until small cities like the ones in Lamorinda can put their "nimby" attitudes aside and start working for the average American taxpayer, more taxes and unsustainable pensions whereby government workers retire at 55 and drain the system simply cannot continue.

Dena Martine  
Moraga

Editor:

So, I made an already long day even longer and attended a recent Moraga Planning Commission meeting. I must say, like most of you, I'd been too busy to attend most Town Council and Planning Commission meetings for many years, but am glad I went on 11/30. On the agenda was a proposal by out of town developers to replace an orchard with high rise, high density housing with questionable commercial buildings.

One of the reasons my family and I moved to Moraga almost 25 years ago was to enjoy the semi-rural nature of the town, and the fact that an individual's voice would be heard in a such a small town.

Well, even in Moraga, one voice is not enough. It's time for us Moragans to wake up and raise our voices. If we don't, out of town, special interest, and short term gain developer centric concerns will push their way through. We must remain vigilant in order for democracy to thrive. Our hard working and capable officials are crying out to hear what we, the citizens of this quiet little town at the end of the cul-de-sac, want the future of our town to be. They

ask for and deserve our input and support.

Do we want high rise, high density, high rise housing? Do we want more empty store fronts and increased traffic, congestion, overwhelming our minimal town services? Or, do we want to preserve our quality of life and the reasons most of us moved here? Regardless of how you feel, now is the time to wake up and make your voices heard. Otherwise, the future of our little town will be determined by a determined and organized minority, and democracy will wither in our silence.

For starters, please try and read the gist of the Moraga Center Specific Plan, [http://www.moraga.ca.us/production/moraga\\_moraga\\_center\\_specific\\_plan.php](http://www.moraga.ca.us/production/moraga_moraga_center_specific_plan.php). For me, I see this as a veiled, self serving view by an outside concern of what our town should be. It threatens to open the flood gates of high density housing. As many may recall, to prevent becoming a large, noisy city and to retain our town's character was the main reason Moraga incorporated 35 years ago. High rise, high traffic, and high density housing we did not want then, and we do not want it now. The applicants want to change our semi-rural housing density to dozens of units per acre, alluding to State mandated low income housing requirements which most communities cannot possibly meet, at the expense of due process and carefully thought out and enacted local building codes and zoning ordinances.

Most of us favor appropriate, controlled development in our area and welcome our out-of-town wealthy landowners to develop their property, but only if they abide by the rules and guidelines everyone else does.

Attend a Planning Commission and Town Council meeting or two! Send them an email expressing your concerns and dreams. Speak up now to help preserve our quality of life and at the same time allow peace and prosperity.

Concerned citizens of Moraga and all of Lamorinda, speak up!

Ferenc Kovac  
Moraga

**Public Forum JOIN IT**

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda or one of its cities that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public Forum section.

Just send your letter to [letters@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com) and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum.

**Orinda Historical Society Looks Back and Forward**  
... continued from page 6



Bobbie Landers (center R) and Dick Heggie (R) recipients of the Orinda Historical Society Awards for 2009 with OHS President Lucy Hupp Williams (L) and Charles Voolmar (L center)  
Photo by Kent Long

Simpson then looked forward to his vision, created with fellow resident and urban planner Peter Hasselman, for a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly downtown Orinda that would literally bridge Gateway Center and Orinda Village. He exhibited Hasselman's colorful, energetic sketches of a revitalized and architecturally reworked commercial District that would include street-side dining, public plazas, and cascading waterfalls.

Theater owner Tom Peterson was also on hand to

talk to guests about the Orinda of tomorrow, which he hopes will always include the historic art-deco landmark that he manages with partner James Sheehan. "What you have is a real treasure, and we know how to treat your treasure" said Peterson, who has worked in theaters for the past 40 years. Peterson described some of the maintenance that he has already completed at the theater, which includes new lighting and repaired seats. While he acknowledged that the independent theater business is not easy these days, Peterson remained committed and cautiously optimistic that he and Sheehan would be profitable in their venture. "We love old theaters," said Peterson concluding with, "Thank you for allowing us in your neighborhood."



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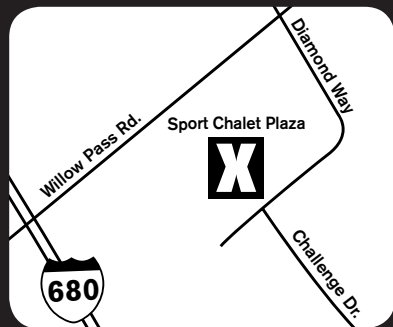
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Dec. 24: 8am - 7pm. Mall hours may vary.

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**Not to be missed**

**ART**

**Last weekend! Hearst Gallery's exhibit- Out of This World:** Real & Imagined Images of Our Solar System. Dazzling large-scale digital images of our solar system - planet surfaces & their moons - by the best known space artists of our time; images from Voyager 1 & 2, Mars Rover, Hubble, and Cassini missions; wide-screen Mars Mariner Valley fly-through simulation; interactive computer programs; model of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory Mars Rover robot set in a "Marscape;" NASA history in film, narrated by Harrison Ford, study table. The Hearst Gallery is located at Saint Mary's College, 1928 Saint Mary's Road, Moraga. The building is directly behind the Chapel. Hours: Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Suggested admission donation: \$3.

**Moraga Art Gallery's group show, "Pitchers, Pictures and Lotsa Bling,"**



Donna Arganbright

features local artists showing watercolor, acrylic and oil paintings, ceramics, photography, mixed media, jewelry and glass designs. The show will run through January 9, 2010. The Gallery is featuring the work of potter Donna Arganbright, who enjoys creating original, functional pottery and painter Bob Wahrhaftig, who loves to paint with strong colors; most recently portraits and figurative paintings. Moraga Art Gallery is located at 570 Center St, Rheem Valley Shopping Center/next to CVS Drugs in Moraga. Open Tuesday - Sunday, 12-5 pm. (925) 376-5407.

**"All That Glitters," is the annual holiday exhibit**



Julee Herman at the Lafayette Gallery, 50 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette. Painting, prints, photography, ceramics, watercolor and mixed media art works feature memories and per-

sonal expression. Select gallery artists create artistic ornaments and cards to welcome the season. The exhibit continues through December 24. Gallery hours Tuesday-Saturday 11am - 5 pm. Phone (925) 284-2788. [www.lafayettegallery.net](http://www.lafayettegallery.net).

**The Epperson Gallery in Crockett presents "Let's have a Look"** a major show of works by legendary painters Pam Glover of Orinda and Jerrold Turner of Benicia. Both are founding members of the Outsiders, a group of fellow artists whose work has shown in galleries and museums throughout California. Pam and Jerrold have promoted the Plein Air movement in Northern California and they have influenced many of the current Plein Air painters in the Bay Area. Show dates are Dec.5th 2009 through Jan. 10th 2010. Gallery hours are 11:00 am to 5:00 pm Friday through Sunday. 1400 Pomona Street Crockett Ca. 94525, (510) 787-2925, [www.eppersongallery.com](http://www.eppersongallery.com).

**MUSIC**

**All That Jazz, a concert featuring the Campolindo Jazz Band** will be held on Thursday, December 10 at 7:30p.m. in the Campolindo Performing Arts Center, 300 Moraga Road, Moraga. Admission is free and open to the public. Special guest artists for the evening will be Fundz Jazz, a group of veteran San Francisco Bay Area musicians that have performed together in a wide variety of musical ensembles over the last 20 years. They come together in Fundz Jazz to perform some of their favorite jazz compositions from the last five decades. The group includes John Xepoleas - drums, Mike Williams - Guitar, Marc Levine - Bass and Dave Scott - Trumpet. Join us for an enjoyable evening of great jazz.

**Additional School Holiday Concerts:**

Stanley Middle School - Winter Concert I (Beginning Instruments, Cadet Band, Concert Gold Band, Chorus) - 7:30, December 16; Winter Concert II (Concert Band Green, Symphonic Band, Strings Intermezzo, Orchestra) Acalanes High School - Winter Instrumental Concert, December 9 & 10 at 7:30; Winter Choral Concert, December 15 & 17 at 5:30 Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School - Winter Concert (Band), December 10, 7:00;

**Not to be missed**

Winter Concert (Orchestra, Chorus), December 17, 7:00 Campolindo High School - Winter Choral Concert, December 15&17 at 7:30; Wassail Concert, December 16, 7:30 Miramonte High School - Winter Instrumental Concert, December 9, 7:30; Winter Choral Concert, December 16&17 at 7:30.

**Lafayette Holiday Sing-a-long.** Thursday, Dec. 10th from 6:30pm to 9:00 pm. Where: 71 Lafayette Circle. The French Bakery. Please bring one can of food for our local food bank. See article page 19

**Romantic Classical Guitar Concert and Fundraiser** on Friday, December 11 from 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. Take a fabulously romantic musical interlude during the holiday season to the Andes of South America and the Pyrenees of Spain. Classical guitarist Nihat Iyriboz will perform the 19th and 20th century luscious music by composers like Francisco Tarrega from Spain and Augustine Barrios Mangore from Paraguay. We'll finish off with a holiday choral performance by the award-winning Joaquin Moraga Middle School Choir. Light refreshments provided by Eldercare Services. Call 284-5050 to reserve a spot. Funds raised from this event will support the Lafayette Senior Needs Assessment Project. Lafayette Community Center Live Oak Room \$3 Members / \$5 Non-Members.

**Christmas Bells Are Ringing Sunday,** December 13th at 4:00 p.m. Featuring the Our Saviors Lutheran Church (OSLC) choirs. Choirs, handbells and congregational choral singing - nostalgic and fun, sometimes surprising and always family oriented, followed by a reception. Free. OSLC's gift to the community, 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette.

**Annual Christmas Concerts** - Magnify JOY, December 12 & 13 at 4 pm at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church. Magnify Joy will feature the Festival, Chamber, Chancel and Handbell Choirs, Revelers, Moodswing, Jazz Trio, Jubilate Baroque Orchestra, Jonathan Dimmock, and includes works by Near, Paulus, Memly, Bittrich and seasonal jazz favorites. Tickets are free, but required. Child-care by reservation only, [kimberley@LOPC.org](mailto:kimberley@LOPC.org). A free-

will offering will be taken. Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. (925)283-8722.

**Pacific Boychoir Academy: "Harmonies of the Season"** on Saturday, December 19 at 7:00. Internationally renowned for rich and pure tone, bringing life and magic with them every time they sing. Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive.

**THEATRE**

**Holiday Spirits Come to Town Hall with Scrooge!** This December, ghosts will be haunting the historic Town Hall Theatre for their ever-popular holiday offering as they bring Leslie Bricusse's musical Scrooge to life! Based on the 1970 movie starring Albert Finney, Scrooge is a musical retelling of Charles Dickens' classic tale, A Christmas Carol. Director Jessica Richards returns to Town Hall from California Shakespeare Festival, after directing last season's Miracle on 34th Street. Scrooge is guaranteed to bring smiles to patrons of all ages. Scrooge runs Dec. 3 through Dec. 20. It is rated PG (due to some spooky ghosts) and is about 2 hours long. Contact Town Hall Theatre Box Office at (925) 283-1557 or purchase online at [www.TownHallTheatre.com](http://www.TownHallTheatre.com). See article page 15.

**The Stratford at Countrywood, a Senior Community,** presents A Dickens Holiday Celebration to benefit The Diablo Theater Company (formerly Diablo Light Opera Company) on Sunday, December 13th, 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Performers will turn the Stratford at Countrywood into the streets of Victorian London and bring to life scenes from Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Four (4) special musical performances will be staged in the Grand View Parlor from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. Reserve your tickets now by calling (925) 932-9910 or online at [www.tinyurl.com/DickensEvent](http://www.tinyurl.com/DickensEvent).

**The Orinda Ballet Academy & Company** presents "The Nutcracker". Dates: Friday, Dec 11, 7:00 pm; Saturday, Dec 12, 2:00 pm and 6:30 pm; and Sunday, Dec 13, 1:30 pm. Tickets: Orinda Community Center Office & at the door on performance days Adult: \$15, Child: \$12. Location: Orinda Library Auditorium.

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## Not to be missed

**California Academy of Performing Arts (CAPA) Presents "The Nutcracker"** on Friday, Dec 11th, 7:00 pm (includes concerto); Saturday, Dec 12th, 2:00 pm; Saturday, Dec 12th, 7:00 pm (includes concerto); and Sunday, Dec 13th, 2:00 pm. Campolindo High School Performing Arts Center. For more information go to <http://www.capadance.net>. See article page 18.

**Snow (and Santa!) is expected in Orinda on December 12!**



The California Independent Film Festival (CAIFF) presents a very special screening of "White Christmas" on Saturday, December 12 at 4:00 and 7:00 p.m. in the historic Orinda Theater. This classic holiday film (the first done in VISTAVISION) was made for wide-screen viewing and features Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney and the music of Irving Berlin. Prior to the screening, Santa will be on hand from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Theater for wish-making and picture-taking. The Miramonte Chamber Choir will also perform. Proceeds from the screening will benefit the Lamorinda Teen Center and CAIFF. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$13 for seniors and students and can be purchased at the Orinda or Rheem Theater box offices or online at [www.caiff.org](http://www.caiff.org).

**Rip Van Winkle will be presented at LeFevre Theatre in January.** Audiences, young or old, will delight in this entertaining story, written in 1820 by Washington Irving and adapted for the stage by SMC Professor Michael Cook. Find out where Rip goes, why he is gone for so long, and what happens upon his return to his village. The short story is elaborated into a full one-hour of children-focused entertainment. When: Wednesday, January 27, at 7 p.m. and Thursday, January 28, at 4 p.m. Where: LeFevre Theatre, Saint Mary's College of California, 1928 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga. Ticket Price: \$8.00. For tickets and information, please call (925) 631-4670 or e-mail [scashill@stmarys-ca.edu](mailto:scashill@stmarys-ca.edu).

### OTHER HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

**Ace Dance Academy, conveniently located** at 1825 Mt. Diablo Blvd in Walnut Creek, will be hosting an Open House on December 12, 2009, from 1pm – 4pm. All are invited to come by the studio to enjoy some holiday food, fun and a brief dance demonstration from selected classes at 2pm. The Open House will also feature Ace's Foster a Dream Donation in which Ace will collect \$10 gift cards to Target and Wal-Mart to help brighten the holidays for teenage foster children. There will also be a special visitor from the North Pole—so bring your little dancer (or aspiring prancer) for this wonderful holiday treat! (925)-934-7466; [info@acedanceacademy.org](mailto:info@acedanceacademy.org).

**Holiday Pictures with Frosty!** When: Saturday December 12th and Sunday December 13th 11am - 12pm. Come get your picture taken with Frosty! Come in anytime between 11 and Noon, feel free to bring in your own camera, and let your kid(s) have a blast while telling

## Not to be missed

Frosty what they wish for during the holidays. Where: SadieDey's Cafe 4210 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland. [www.sadiedeyscafe.com](http://www.sadiedeyscafe.com), (510) 601-7378.

**The Moraga Police Officers Association (MPOA)** is holding its annual "Stuffed Animals for Emergencies" drive through 12/27/09. The MPOA is collecting new or gently used stuffed animals for S.A.F.E. (Stuffed Animals for Emergencies), which provides stuffed animals to police departments and other agencies to give to children who may be encountering traumatic situations. The drop off is in the Moraga Police Department lobby at 329 Rheem Blvd.

**Christmas on the Hill:** The Songs and The Story on Sunday, December 13th at 7 pm. Sanctuary, Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church, 10 Moraga Valley Ln., Moraga, [www.mvpcetoday.org](http://www.mvpcetoday.org) or (925) 376-4800.

**The Bay Area Rescue Mission Wrapping Party** at Willow Spring Church is in its 6th year. We host over 200 volunteers to wrap presents for homeless and needy children who are served by the Bay Area Rescue Mission. WHEN: Saturday, December 19th from 9:30a.m.-1:30p.m. WHERE: Willow Spring Church, 1689 School Street in Moraga.

**Roughing It Day Camp is collecting** clean, gently used coats and jackets for One Warm Coat and new, unwrapped toy for Toys for Tots. One Warm Coat is dedicated to distributing reusable coats, free of charge, directly to local children and adults- all shapes and sizes are welcome. The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program distributes new toys to needy families for Christmas. Just bring your

clean, gently used coats and new, unwrapped toys to 1010 Oak Hill Road, Lafayette, Monday through Friday, from 9am to 5pm, December 1st through 18th. All families that donate items will be entered into a drawing to win a free week of Acteeva Day Camp for summer 2010.

**Chabad will hold a Lafayette Menorah Lighting** and celebration at the Safeway at 3540 Mt. Diablo Blvd. beginning at 7:30pm on Wednesday, Dec. 16. The celebration will include special greetings by Lafayette Mayor Don Tatzin, crafts for children and traditional Chanukah donuts. Chabad is known for its Grand Menorah Lightings including this year's lighting at Broadway Plaza in Walnut Creek, Sunday, December 13 beginning at 4:00 pm.

### CLUBS

**Saint Mary's College Guild's annual Christmas Party** featuring, "Dancing Trees!" will be on December 17th from 11a.m. to 2 p.m. Tickets are \$45. Saint Mary's College Guild is dedicated to raising funds, through its various activities, for scholarships for students needing financial aid. Saint Mary's College, Soda Center, Moraga. For information call (925) 284-7750.

**The Knites of Columbus Council #7683** will host their annual Crab Feed on Saturday, January 30, 2010 in St. Monica's Peace Room in Moraga. Appetizers and no-host Cocktails will be served beginning at 6:00pm. Dinner will be served at 7:30pm and will include salad, pasta, french bread, fresh crocked crab and dessert. Chicken is available when ordered in advance. Tickets are \$50, must be reserved and paid for in advance and are nonrefundable. For tickets contact Karl Anderson at 283-3679.

## FREE ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENTS!

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**Who we are:** The Lafayette Acupuncture Center has been part of the community since 2002. Our acupuncturist, Dr. Elliot Wagner, is one of central Contra Costa County's most experienced practitioners of the ancient healing art of acupuncture. Read more about him and our practice by visiting [www.lafayetteacupuncture.com](http://www.lafayetteacupuncture.com).

**Why we are offering Free Treatments:** We would like to do our part to contribute to the community during these hard times, so the Lafayette Acupuncture Center is making Free acupuncture treatments available this winter. They are completely Free and without obligation.

**How it works:** One day each week we treat a specific health problem, an identified area of need, or a specific group of patients. One week may be focused on a problem that becomes worse during the winter, such as arthritis or asthma. Another week is focused on an athletic-related problem such as tennis elbow or heel pain. Another week, we see a specific group such as children, high school athletes or veterans. These are examples. Each week we designate one ailment or group for a Free treatment.

**How to receive your Free Care:** On the day we are treating your ailment or group, simply come to our office. Appointments are not needed. Please bring x-rays, MRIs, or any other reports if available. A doctor's diagnosis is helpful, but not necessary. If you are not sure whether your problem fits our guidelines for that day, please call Gizelle or Dr. Wagner at our office. When you arrive, you will be welcomed to our practice and given some necessary forms to fill out. You will be seen in a private room, and the treatment will be explained to you. You will receive the respect and care you expect in any doctor's office.

#### Treatment schedule for December, 2009:

<b>Monday</b> <b>December 14</b>	<b>4:00-8:00 PM</b> Please arrive by 7:00 PM	<b>Shoulder pain</b> <i>Pain, stiffness, reduced mobility.</i>
<b>Monday</b> <b>December 21</b>	<b>4:00-8:00 PM</b> Please arrive by 7:00 PM	<b>Arthritis of the knee</b> <i>Chronic pain, swelling, poor stability.</i>
<b>Monday</b> <b>December 28</b>	<b>4:00-8:00 PM</b> Please arrive by 7:00 PM	<b>Low Back Pain</b> <i>New injury or chronic.</i>

**Lafayette Acupuncture Center**  
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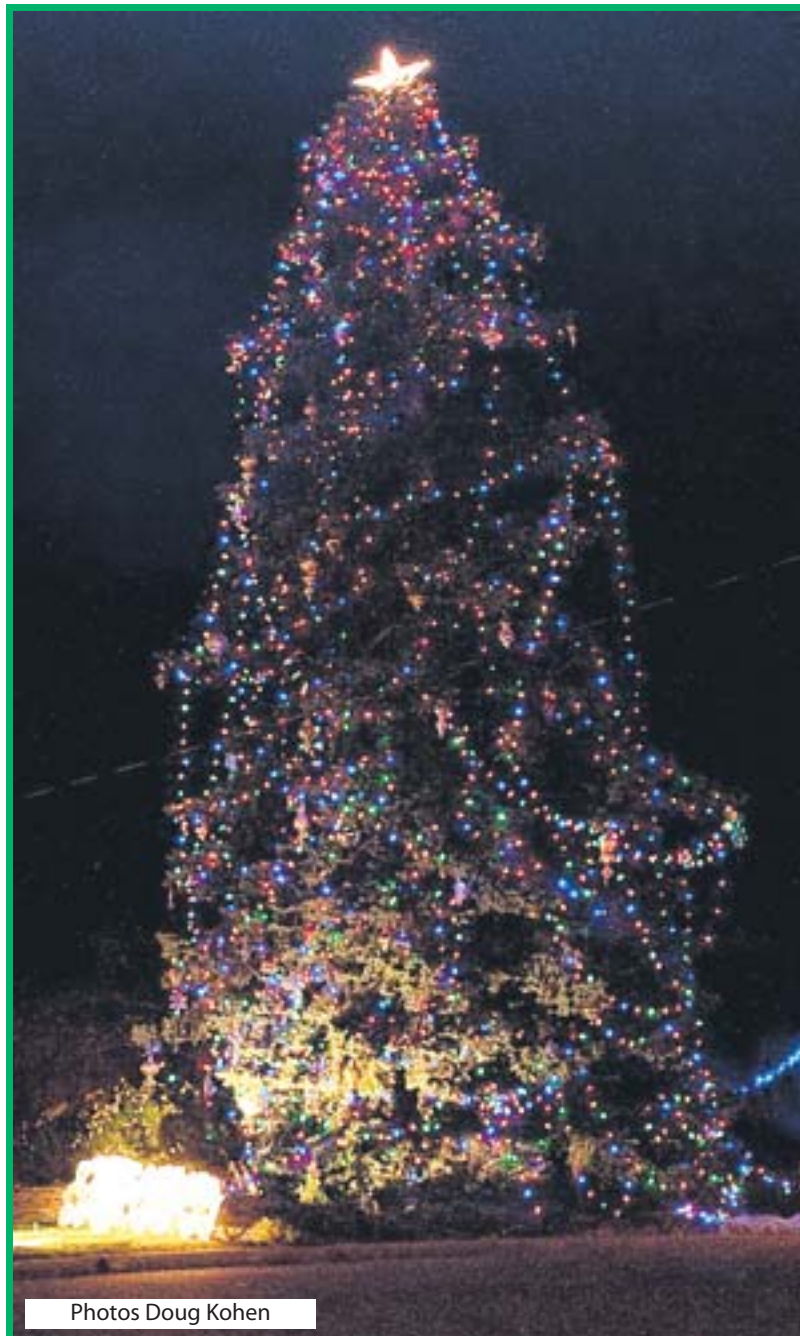
### SENIORS

**Ongoing workshops with the Lafayette Senior Services.** Drop-ins welcome. \$1 Members/ \$3 Non-Members unless otherwise noted. LCC, 500 Saint Mary's Road, Lafayette. To sign up, call 284-5050. Embracing Aging with Story and Movement, Thursday, 12/17 from 1:00 -2:00pm Self-Discovery and Aging' Cre-

ative Writing Workshop, Friday 12/18 from 1:00 - 2:30pm Positive Living Forum (a.k.a "Happiness Club") Thursdays, 12/10, 10:30am – noon, Bi-Monthly Caregiver Support Group, Monday 12/21. 1:30 – 2:30pm, Tea Dancing and dance lessons. Every Wednesday, 12:30 – 3:00pm, LCC: Live Oak Room, \$2 Members/ \$4 non-members.

## A Tradition of Holiday Cheer

By Cristina Kim



Photos Doug Kohen



Martha and Steve McLaren



Lynne and Dave McGraw

Seventeen years ago Dave and Lynne McGraw met Steve and Martha McLaren. The couples became friends and began a grand tradition of decorating their Moraga homes for Christmas. When they first started collaborating on decorations neither couple could predict that they would become part of the fabric of their community's holiday festivities. Over the years the McGraw and McLaren homes have become locally famous for their elaborate decorations, which draw a crowd of spectators. Both couples agree that

while they started decorating their homes to bring cheer to their families, they continue to do it for all the people who walk or drive by every night to see the display. To celebrate the community and recognize those who come by to admire the lights, the McLarens and McGraws added a tree lighting ceremony. Open to the public, the event occurs every first Saturday after Thanksgiving and revolves around the lighting of the Douglas fir tree that graces the McGraws' front yard. Dave McGraw believes the event

helps everyone get into the holiday spirit and provides a place for people to "enjoy an evening in a small town community." This year many Lamorinda residents came to enjoy the tree lighting and sip complimentary hot cocoa and wine. The mood was decidedly festive and reflected the holiday cheer and generosity that is often lost amid the stress of holiday shopping. People yelled "Merry Christmas!" as the lights came on and everyone cheered for the beautiful tree. "It came on again. PG&E loves us again," joked Steve

McLaren. Minh Huebner, who recently moved to Moraga, said, "I think it is awesome to have this in our neighborhood. It really brings the holiday cheer." Lynne McGraw explained, "We do it for the love of other people." The couples' generosity and goodwill shines through all the decorations and warms the heart on even the chilliest of nights. If you missed the lighting ceremony but still want to take a peek, simply drive or walk down to Lynwood Drive in Moraga.



Photo Doug Kohen

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**Grounds to Grow**

By Susie Iventosch



Cluster of BTTR oyster mushrooms

Photo: Susie Iventosch

If the saying is true that “we are what we eat” we might all wake up one day to find we’ve turned into coffee grounds! Not only do we enjoy drinking a lot of gourmet coffee, but now there is a brand new Bay Area business, BTTR Ventures, that has discovered a way to cultivate organic oyster mushrooms in recycled coffee grounds.

BTTR Ventures, pronounced “better”, is an acronym for “back to the roots” a phrase that, for two young entrepreneurs, merges the concepts of sustainability, progress, and social responsibility into their budding enterprise.

Nikhil Arora and Alejandro Velez, both recent U.C. Berkeley Haas Business School graduates,

attended a business ethics guest lecture by Professor Alan Ross in 2008. Their interest was piqued as Ross explained that mushrooms grow on hardwood and that, biologically-speaking, coffee beans are actually a hardwood. The proverbial light bulb went on and these young men made the connection of growing mushrooms in recycled coffee grounds.

BTTR Ventures is a regular at the Moraga Farmers’ Market and the company has been very pleased with the response from the community. They not only offer the mushrooms for sale, but also sell their Gourmet Gardens (home growing mushroom kits) at the market. The kits are a fun way to learn how the process works, and to watch your own mushrooms spawn and grow from inoculated coffee grounds into edible ingredients for gourmet cooking.

“We discovered a way to use the beautiful fact that we could actually take local waste and turn it into mushrooms and mushroom

compost,” Velez said. “With the huge global coffee trend we are experiencing, we realized that literally tons of coffee grounds are going into the garbage daily.”

Though it may seem like a slam-dunk to get coffee houses to part with their grounds, it was not so easy. It takes some planning and effort on the part of the coffee companies to store the grounds for recycling. Peet’s Coffee and Tea was up for the challenge. BTTR currently uses approximately one ton of grounds every week for their mushroom growing effort, which they are able to procure from just two Peet’s locations. Just imagine how many coffee houses there are in the Bay Area and you’ll get an idea how big this business could become.

“We are excited to be able to add two more value-add life cycles to what was once considered ‘trash,’” Arora said. “We hope to revolutionize the standards for resource management in our communities.”

**BTTR Oyster Mushroom Fettuccine with Arugula and Sun-dried Tomatoes** by Chloe Coscarelli  
 (Yields 4 servings)

My family loved this fresh and simple pasta recipe created by Chloe Coscarelli especially for BTTR Ventures. I would recommend doubling the amount of mushrooms, because they reduce in volume quite a bit with the browning. And, since we love pine nuts on this sort of dish, we toasted a few and tossed them right on top!

**Ingredients**

- 1 pound fettuccine pasta
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 6 ounces BTTR oyster mushrooms (2½ cups)
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- ¼ cup white or Marsala wine
- 1/3 cup sun-dried tomatoes
- 1 bag arugula (approximately 4 cups)
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup Asiago cheese, grated

**Directions**

1. Cook pasta according to directions. Drain and toss with ¼ cup olive oil.
2. Sauté mushrooms with pinch of salt in medium pan over medium heat until slightly browned.
3. Add garlic and white wine and simmer until liquid evaporates, about 2 minutes.
4. Toss sautéed mushrooms, sundried tomatoes and arugula with hot pasta until arugula has fully wilted.
5. Season with salt and pepper and sprinkle with grated Asiago cheese.



Fettuccine with arugula, sun-dried tomatoes and BTTR oyster mushrooms

Photo: Susie Iventosch



Gourmet Garden

Photo: courtesy BTTR Ventures

**INFO BOX**

- BTTR website: <http://www.bttventures.com/>
- BTTR Ventures Founders, Alejandro Velez and Nikhil Arora, were recently selected as finalists for Business Week’s list of America’s Best Young Entrepreneurs. [http://images.businessweek.com/ss/09/10/10\\_09\\_entrepreneurs\\_25\\_and\\_under/4.htm](http://images.businessweek.com/ss/09/10/10_09_entrepreneurs_25_and_under/4.htm)
- BTTR Ventures Phone Number: (888) 688-8305
- You can visit the BTTR stall at the Moraga Farmers’ Market most Sundays.

This recipe is available on our web site. Go to: [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com)

Susie can be reached at [suziven@gmail.com](mailto:suziven@gmail.com)

Many of our readers like Susie’s recipes. Our website now features a link to our recipe page where you can read, print or download all of the recipes we have published.

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## Republic of Cake Arrives in City of Orinda

By Lee Borrowman



Sophia Hubbell (left) and Ava Tajbaksh enjoy a variety of cupcakes at Republic of Cake



Sam's Very Messy Chocolate Cupcake Photo provided

**M**ove over, Cake Boss. Orinda now has bragging rights to its very own cupcake bakery. All cupcakes, all the time. Republic of Cake (ROC) opened at Theater Square last weekend, and will hold a grand opening celebration on Saturday, December 12, at 2:00 p.m.

Why cupcakes? Because, according to baker Chih-Chung Fang, "they offer such perfect little bites in endless combinations, and I don't have to share." Peter McNiff, ROC's business manager, believes there's a market for really good cupcakes sold at very reasonable prices. "There are currently two kinds of cupcakes out there," he says, "the Safeway kind, and the \$5 kind." ROC cupcakes range from .85 for a mini cupcake to \$2.75 for a savory cupcake or a very messy chocolate cupcake.

And why now? Long-time friends turned business partners, Fang and McNiff are hoping that

cupcakes will be just the ticket to satisfy your sweet tooth in good times and bad. The current economic climate, rather than discouraging them from setting up shop, was actually a motivator. "We watched our property values fall and our investments tank, and we decided to put all of our resources into something we manage ourselves. If we fail, we know who to blame," said McNiff, who spent twenty years in the telecommunications industry. Fang is a reformed molecular biologist who happily moved from the laboratory to the kitchen.

There are several things that may set Republic of Cake apart from the typical gourmet cupcake shop. Its owners say that ROC is striving for a small carbon footprint; McNiff and Fang use local providers for their ingredients, and will put your cupcakes in a bag rather than a box (although boxes are available for purchase). Fang

says that instead of curlicues and artificial additives, he uses natural ingredients. "That doesn't mean we won't have pink frosting," he explains, "but it will be colored and flavored naturally with food instead of chemicals."

ROC also offers an unusual Sweet and Salty line of cupcakes, featuring savory items such as the Mushroom Cheddar Cheese cupcake, and the Sage & Onion Cranberry cupcake. Savory cupcakes were McNiff's idea; Fang made it happen. "There are other savory cupcakes out there; chocolate cupcakes with peanut frosting and bacon sprinkled on top. That's not savory to me. Savory is onions, mushrooms, cheese, sage and thyme; flavors that are intrinsically sweet themselves," explains Fang. McNiff says the savory cupcakes have just as much sugar as a regular cupcake, and they can take people by surprise. "I have to tell you what it is," he says, "If I put a savory cup-

cake in front of you without telling you, you'll think 'vanilla or chocolate'; you'll take a bite and spit it out." But keep an open mind, and a whole new cupcake experience awaits you.

ROC will also offer daily specials. Fridays, for example, will feature Happy Hour cupcakes (think Tequila Sunrise, with frosting). "Everything will be as fresh as possible; we'll never sell day-old products," states McNiff. Fang adds, "We'll do two bakes each day, once in the morning and again in the afternoon." Bargains can be had at the end of each day, providing there are cupcakes left to sell.

Republic of Cake is located at 2 Theater Square, across from Shelby's; 925-254-3900, <http://republicofcake.com>.

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

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### The Cupcake Outing

Having been raised a "foodie" in Berkeley, a city well known for its plethora of gourmet eating establishments, I laid claim to this article (rank hath its privileges) for two reasons: The cupcake baker extraordinaire, Chih-Chung Fang, worked for six years in one of my favorite Berkeley restaurants, Wendy Brucker's *Rivoli*. I also saw an opportunity to do something fun with my daughter; this story begged a mother-daughter cupcake outing. The daughter, being in middle-school, prefers not to be seen alone with me in public so we brought a friend along. (I've long suspected the reason it's okay to be seen with your mother when you are with a friend is that you can pass mom off as the chauffeur.)

There were seven varieties of cupcakes on display when we arrived last Saturday morning, so we ordered one of each. We experienced a brief moment of disappointment when none of them were Sam's Very Messy Chocolate Cupcake. "We had a chocolate cake catastrophe this morning," bemoaned Peter McNiff.

We learned that Sam was McNiff's son, a special needs child who died earlier this year at the age of twelve. "He was the most incredible kid," said McNiff, "he went through so much, and never complained." During ROC's first month, 10% of the proceeds from the sales of Sam's namesake cupcake will go to Children's Hospital of Seattle, Sam's second home. In the future, McNiff added, some of those proceeds will go to support local charities that customers feel are important.

### Two girls, seven cupcakes:

The chocolate/chocolate cupcake (devil's food cake with chocolate frosting) took an early lead in the taste test, according to our friend Sophie Hubbell. She later decided that the Pumpkin Nut Cupcake (with brown sugar buttercream and candied pecans) was her favorite. My daughter, Ava, declared that the sweet vanilla frosting makes the cupcake, so whether the cake is vanilla, chocolate, or even gingerbread, if it's topped with vanilla frosting you can't miss.

Holiday eggnog lovers take note - the Eggnog Cupcake is for you, complete with a dusting of ground nutmeg. However, my personal favorite was the Gingerbread and Meyer Lemon Cupcake. The gingerbread was delicious, but it was the Meyer lemon frosting that took the cake, dancing lightly on the tongue and demanding a satisfied sigh of pleasure.

On the way home, Sophie groaned a warning: "Make sure you tell people that it's not a good idea to eat **too many** cupcakes..."

## business briefs

**Temporary Art Gallery in Downtown Lafayette**  
3586 Mount Diablo Boulevard, 262-9814,  
[www.zetagallery.com](http://www.zetagallery.com)

For a limited time Zeta Gallery, in collaboration with local and national artists and designers, presents up a temporary art gallery in the downtown Lafayette area. It will be open from December 4th 2009 through March 4th 2010. Opening night was Friday, December 4. The gallery will feature fine photography, fine jewelry, paintings, drawings, bronze and ceramic sculpture, glass art, pottery, steel art, furniture and the art of Africa. Also, Zeta Gallery will be conducting silent auctions of fine art with all proceeds benefiting Children's Hospital in Oakland. The space used to be Fitness Together. "The owner of the space gave us a really good deal on the rent after we explained to him what we want to accomplish," says Zeta Gallery owner Evelyn Fulgado-Taylor. Regular exhibition hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Contemporary Sculptures on Exhibition at Scott McCue's Studio**  
83 Orinda Way, Orinda, 253 1719, [www.scottmccue.com](http://www.scottmccue.com)



Sculpture by Margaret Keelan: Yellow Brick Road



Sculpture by Annie Stryke: Open Mind

Thirty years ago, when Scott McCue was working in a camera store, an artist friend of his asked how to take great pictures of his art. After trying to explain, McCue decided to do it himself and went on photographing art for artists and museums. The photographer set-up shop in Orinda 20 years ago and has been renowned for portraits and wedding pictures. He continued his work with artists, and has been taking photographs for the Museum of Modern Art and the Hearst Gallery. "Artists need good pictures because there are many more people who see the pictures than the actual pieces," he says, "and shooting eye-catching pictures is what I do best." For the second time in his Orinda store, McCue is featuring the work of some of the contemporary sculptors for whom he has taken photographs. "I am presenting

the work of two very well known local artists, Margaret Keelan and Annie Stryke," says McCue. He hopes that the public response will be as good for this exhibition as it was for the previous one, and that most of the pieces will sell. McCue expects to continue exhibiting his favorite artists throughout the coming year.

**Shopping Made Easy for Men and Women at Serendipity Jewels**  
1280 Summit Rd, Lafayette, 935-0971,  
[www.serendipityjewels.net](http://www.serendipityjewels.net)

Karin Lechner wants to make it very convenient for women to get their wish this holiday season. On Wednesday, December 16th from 11 a.m.-8p.m., she is holding an open-house with wine and refreshments where women can either purchase a holiday present for themselves or register their choices on a wish list. Then on Sunday, December 20th from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., men are invited to visit. "Football will be on all the TV's. Beer, wine and 'manly snacks' will be served while men choose gifts themselves or from their lady's wish lists," says Lechner. She will gift wrap the purchases while the men relax, eat and watch the games.

### News from the Three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

- Green Committee on Wednesday, December 16 at 11:45 a.m. in the Chamber Conference Room
- Entrepreneur's Club on Thursday, December 17 at 8:30 a.m. in the Chamber Conference Room

### Moraga

The Chamber has improved the "Shop Moraga First" web site and has created a new logo. Members can now list their events and promotions on the web site, and clients will have access to a convenient search feature. Merchants will have easy access to edit the information about their businesses and events. "It is just a 'click and type' mechanism," said Grant Stubblefield of the Community Marketing Group, who presented the update at the November 20th Chamber meeting. "One other interesting feature is that businesses can list search words under which they'd like shoppers to find them when they are looking for a specific item." The Shop Moraga First web site is open to all, Chamber members or not, although members enjoy special privileges such as more free space to describe their businesses. For more information go to [shopmoragafirst.com](http://shopmoragafirst.com)

### Orinda

The Orinda Chamber is ramping up its rally for "Toys for Tots" this year and asks its members to please bring a new, unwrapped toy to the Chamber Holiday Mixer on Thursday December 10th. Business owners who can't be at the mixer or other residents who want to participate are invited to drop a gift in the large marked

bin in front of the Chamber office at 26 Orinda Way (by the Library). "Bringing more than one toy will ensure even more smiles," says the Chamber's Executive Director Candy Kattenburg. Other collection places can be found in the Orinda Theatre lobby, the City of Orinda offices (22 Orinda Way) and at The Framemaker (19 Orinda Way, Suite C). The mission of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys, and distribute those toys as Christmas gifts to needy children. Orinda Chamber Christmas Mixer on Thursday, December 10th from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Once again Mechanics Bank is hosting our Chamber Christmas Mixer. This is one event not to be missed! Good old fashion Holiday Fun. 77 Moraga Way, Orinda. Free admission.

If you have a business brief to share,  
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## Five Orinda Homes Recognized for Architectural Excellence

... continued from page 6



7 Camino Lenada, Steven Forster, Forster Associates, Architects Photo provided

### 2009 Mayor's Awards for Architectural Excellence

#### Minor Projects

7 Camino Lenada  
Darryl and Jana Rains  
Steven Forster, Forster Associates, Architects

513 Miner Road  
Jeff and Ruth Bailey  
Jarvis Architects

39 Via Hermosa  
Russ Rettig  
Stan Nielsen, Nielsen Architects

#### Major Projects

15 Las Aromas  
John and Dayna Sayres  
Steven Kubitschek, Residential Designer

51 Los Altos  
Dan and Laura Wall  
Richard P. Kattenburg, Architect

see more photos on our web site  
www.lamorindaweekly.com

## Lamorinda Home Sales continued

<b>LAFAYETTE</b>	Last reported: 8
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$395,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,380,000
<b>MORAGA</b>	Last reported: 10
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$180,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,035,000
<b>ORINDA</b>	Last reported: 6
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$580,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,380,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

### LAFAYETTE

14 Chapel Drive, \$1,100,000, 4 Bdrms, 2319 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 11-5-09  
688 Francis Drive, \$475,000, 3 Bdrms, 2025 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 11-13-09  
4 Gilmore Court, \$560,000, 3 Bdrms, 1124 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 11-16-09  
3527 Hamlin Road, \$1,276,000, 3 Bdr, 2273 SqFt, 1947 YrBlt, 11-10-09  
1004 Howard Hills Rd, \$1,150,000, 4 Bdr, 3099 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 11-16-09  
1208 Rose Lane, \$1,380,000, 3 Bdrms, 2305 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 11-13-09  
3600 Walnut Street, \$395,000, 2 Bdrms, 854 SqFt, 1939 YrBlt, 11-12-09  
3255 Woodview Dr, \$805,000, 3 Bdr, 1904 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 11-13-09

### MORAGA

144 Ascot Court #2, \$250,000, 2 Bdrms, 945 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 11-16-09  
2067 Ascot Dr #143, \$180,000, 1 Bdrms, 753 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 11-4-09  
2091 Ascot Dr #230, \$281,000, 2 Bdrms, 1153 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 11-13-09  
553 Augusta Drive, \$890,000, 3 Bdrms, 2828 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 11-16-09  
3 Corte Amigos, \$660,000, 3 Bdrms, 2372 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 11-6-09  
718 Crossbrook Dr, \$1,035,000, 4 Bdrms, 2349 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 11-3-09  
1119 Larch Avenue, \$805,000, 4 Bdrms, 1692 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 11-3-09  
85 Shuey Drive, \$790,000, 4 Bdrms, 1627 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 11-6-09  
279 Tharp Drive, \$894,000, 4 Bdrms, 2048 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 11-10-09  
3 Woodford Drive, \$610,000, 4 Bdrms, 1647 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 11-5-09

### ORINDA

49 Brookside Rd, \$1,380,000, 2 Bdrms, 2983 SqFt, 1939 YrBlt, 11-5-09  
48 Evergreen Drive, \$634,000, 2 Bdrms, 1853 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 11-9-09  
117 Meadow Ln, \$839,000, 3 Bdrms, 1743 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 11-10-09  
50 Orchard Road, \$993,000, 2 Bdrms, 1688 SqFt, 1937 YrBlt, 11-6-09  
11 Risa Court, \$883,500, 3 Bdrms, 2157 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 11-4-09  
7 Wanda Lane, \$580,000, 3 Bdrms, 1218 SqFt, 1986 YrBlt, 11-12-09


## Lamorinda Foreclosures continued

### ORINDA


Camino Lenada, JP Morgan, 11-12-09, \$1,184,790, 3799 sf, 4 bd  
Charles Hill Rd, American Home Mortgage, 11-06-09, \$935,000, 5755 sf, 5 bd  
Wanda Lane, Kinecta Credit Union, 11-03-09, \$750,000, 2284 sf, 3 bd

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## Every Christmas Needs a Scrooge

By Lou Fancher



Scrooge and friends (L-R): Samantha Martin (Tiny Tim [Cast A]), John Blytt (Scrooge), Aiden Behrendt (Tiny Tim [Cast B]) Photo by Stu Selland

There may be 3,000 productions of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* playing at the same moment across the continent, but there is one, just one, playing at the Town Hall Theatre (THT) in Lafayette. And each night, after *Scrooge*, the musical retelling of the classic Victorian tale is finished, that particular performance is over, done, fini. Live theater is a thing to be held, but impossible to grasp; rendering the experience simultaneously fleeting and breathtakingly important.

The story of *Scrooge* is familiar: Man with scars from a rough upbringing grows up to be a stingy, bitter man. Takes it out on innocents. Spirits come and show him the wrong paths

he has chosen. Man's confrontation with mortality wakes him up to a new life of gratitude and generosity.

All well and good, if a bit obvious, yet the THT's production is leaps and bounds beyond a lesson in morality. Speaking with the show's director, Jessica Richards, and its leading man, John Blytt, reveals the play's true meaning and transcendent value.

"Part of the magic is that it gives you an opportunity to experience another world," says Richards. "Plus, there are so few opportunities to come together as a community to experience something live," she adds. Richards, The Associate Artistic Director of Cal Shakes,

was eager to direct THT's production for professional and personal reasons. Familiar with staged versions, but not having seen the musical film adaptation, she was surprised to discover *Thank You Very Much* in the song list. "My mother used to sing it to me," Richards explains, "it was a song, never attributed, that had lived inside of me for 20 years." That, combined with the chance to direct an authentic, traditional period classic drew her to THT.

Blytt, in the role of Scrooge for the third time – the first at THT – thrills at the challenge. "For some reason, I'm seeing more sadness underneath everything," he says. Attributing the difference to the intimacy of a small cast and to the director— "She's very hands-on when she needs to be, but knows when to back off, too"— Blytt feels lucky. "I'm as old as Scrooge now, so that helps too."

"John is great fun to watch," says Richards, "he does nothing half way." An actor in the role must portray a full person: recognizable to the audience as the same person before and after, but somehow irrevocably altered. Life teaches an actor this depth of character, as much as theater, and Blytt recalls a particular performance years ago. Just two days after 9-11, the cast and audience wondered if the show should go on. It did, and afterwards, he recalls audience members: thankful, glad, and touched by the healing experience of coming together. "I know it's the audience that makes the difference," he says now, "The instant feedback of live theater is vital."

Richard, mindful of today's culture and steeped in

theatrical tradition, eloquently describes her purpose: "I'm not personally a believer in ghosts, but I am a believer in the parts of the subconscious that draw your attention to the paths not taken." With an equal conviction that "no one is beyond a second chance," Richard has shaped a production that is uplifting, visually compelling and loaded with local talent. Several members of the cast, both children and adults, live in Lamorinda. Blytt, who stopped acting for over 20 years at one point in his career, resumed upon moving back to Contra Costa County. "I think it's something in the water," he suggests, with a soft laugh.

If indeed there is magic in Lamorinda water, let's all drink deep. Then find our way to *Scrooge* and a one-of-a-kind night at the theater.

Scrooge runs December 3-20 at the Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette. For tickets, contact Town Hall Theatre Box Office at (925) 283-1557 or purchase online at [www.TownHallTheatre.com](http://www.TownHallTheatre.com).

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## Q&A with MOFD Fire Chief Randall Bradley

By Lucy Amaral



Chief Randall Bradley at the Orinda Liaison meeting last Monday. Photo Ohlen Alexander

Randall Bradley was sworn in as Moraga-Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) new Fire Chief on November 18th. He joins the District at a time of economic challenges and political controversy. Here, he offers insight into his experience, his goals for the District and his

response to some of those concerns. **Why take this job?** I have prepared my whole career to be a Fire Chief. I was the Fire Chief at Lawrence Livermore Fire Department for six years. When Lawrence Livermore consolidated with the big-

ger Alameda County Fire Department, I became a Deputy Fire Chief. While I gained valuable experience in my position as a Deputy Chief for a large metropolitan fire department, I really wanted to return to my role as a Fire Chief in a smaller organization. When I became aware of the opening at Moraga-Orinda Fire District, it became apparent, almost immediately, that MOFD was a great opportunity for me to use my experience and education to lead a quality organization into the future.

**How has your experience with Alameda County Fire District and Lawrence Livermore Fire Department prepared you for this position?**

As the Deputy Chief of Support Services at the 350 member Alameda County Fire Department, I was responsible for finance and budgeting, facilities and apparatus, public relations and education, emergency preparedness and contract administration. I was also responsible for contract administration for two cities and two National Laboratories that

contract with Alameda County Fire for fire protection which provided me the opportunity to interact with commissions, boards and city councils.

I was the Fire Chief at Lawrence Livermore and, while it was a unique fire department, it had a lot of similarities to MOFD. I had about 100 personnel, 50 of which were uniformed, and an \$18 million dollar budget. The department was well trained and staffed and we had a significant wildland urban interface concern at our testing facility near the Altamont Pass. As the fire chief I was responsible for budget development, strategic planning, organizational development and overall leadership of the fire department that protected some extremely important national assets.

I believe my experiences with both organizations really prepared me for my new position as the MOFD Fire Chief.

**What opportunities do you see for MOFD?**

First, I believe that MOFD is an excellent fire district. The personnel are well trained, well equipped and they really care about the communities they serve. The Board of Directors are elected community servants who bring exceptional business and community service backgrounds that enable them to provide the required direction and oversight of the District. The quality workforce and the leadership provided by the Board provides opportunities to continue to develop an organization that is responsive to the citizens we serve and to continue to look for areas of improvement in service delivery and fiscal responsibility.

**What challenges are you facing as you take on this position?**

One of my primary concerns is how the economic downturn will continue to impact the District. I believe we will need to continue to evaluate the economic forecasts and adjust our budgetary priorities accordingly. I also am concerned about our community relations. Due to some negative articles in the press recently, I believe we need to continue to market our Fire District to our communities and ensure they understand the vital service the District provides to the public. As I stated earlier, our firefighters are very well trained and equipped to protect the lives and properties of the citizens we serve.

**What improvements do you see that can be made within the fire department itself?**

I am new and I am trying not to make any judgments until I have the time to evaluate the organization and the programs and services offered by the District. I am a firm believer that there are drivers that influence how organizations develop and the reasons decision are made. I need to understand those drivers and conduct program reviews to identify areas that require attention. My first impression is that MOFD is an excellent organization that will just require some fine tuning.

**...With MOFD's relationship with the community?**

I think my opportunity to improve our relationship with the community will be by providing the best fire protection and emergency medical service available base on the resources that are allocated to the District. I also believe the Fire District must continue to be involved in the community and give back to community in the form of (off

duty) charitable public service when provided the opportunity. **The cost of the MOFD to Orinda continues to be a concern to a group of Orinda citizens. How do you plan to address this?**

The Fire District is confident that we provide all of the communities that we serve with effective and efficient fire protection and emergency medical services. Our District was formed to ensure service levels were initially increased, then maintained and ultimately controlled at the local level. I believe that we need to engage in an open dialogue with the concerned citizens and communicate our fire protection and emergency medical response service levels and the drivers behind how the service levels were developed and why it is important to maintain the levels under a Fire District governance model. We also need to listen to their concerns, ideas and consider their solutions to identified issues.

**At a recent Orinda City Council meeting, you expressed the desire to meet with the Council to discuss 'mutual interests. What are those mutual interests?**

Examples of mutual interest would be community planning, emergency preparedness, city infrastructure (water systems), fire and police emergency coordination and coordinated strategic planning. I also plan on meeting with the Moraga Council to discuss these items as well.

**When you eventually leave MOFD, what do you hope to have accomplished?**

I hope to leave it better than I found it through leadership and fiscal responsibility.

## BUTTERFLY AWARD FOR MOFD

Moraga-Orinda Fire Department receive Moraga Royale's highly acclaimed "Butterfly Award" highlighting the departments service to the residents and community. The award represents courage, commitment, dedication and overall service.



(L-R) Anthony Stephens; Firefighter, Mike Rattary; Engineer, Dianne Wilson; Executive Director of Moraga Royale and Captain Jerry Lee.

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## MOFD Board Member Pete Wilson Withdraws Resignation

By Lucy Amaral

The Sarge Littlehale Room at Orinda's city offices was standing room only December 2 at the Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Board Meeting, with citizens ardently voicing their opinion during the public comment section on whether the Board should hold a special election to replace resigning Board President Pete Wilson or whether the Board, itself, should appoint a replacement. Wilson had tendered his resignation, citing health reasons, at the MOFD Board Meeting on November 18. A surprise announcement ended the discussion.

While some speakers favored an appointment by the Board, the vast majority of the speakers came out in favor of an open election, most noting that transparency in all efforts is critical at this time and an open election would go a long way to boost the community's confidence in the Board.

The spirited debate became a moot point as Wilson opted to withdraw his resignation. Wilson noted in a letter he read later in the meeting, that a medical crisis in Board Member

Frank Sperling's family caused Wilson to rethink his resignation. According to Wilson's letter, his desire to maintain a Board quorum, along with the fact that Fire Chief Randall Bradley is new in that position, compelled him to rescind his resignation, for the next several months at least.

"It was a very heartfelt gesture on Pete's part and a decision that must have been very difficult for him to make," said Board Member John Wyro. "Saying goodbye the first time was emotional for him, he has given so much, but to step back in when he saw a need must have been equally, if not more, difficult. We look forward to good news from the Sperling household and thank Pete for his dedication to the community."

Almost lost in the shuffle was that night's ratification of MOFD's Local 1230 union's Memorandum of Understanding; in essence, the firefighter's contract. According to Wyro, the union made several strong concessions including no salary increases for the duration of this contract, which expires January 1, 2011, and that a joint labor-

management committee will be formed to review health and retirement options. The committee's goal, according to the contract, is to identify alternate approaches that may provide some cost savings to the District and its employees.

"It is a new beginning to a cooperative effort with Local 1230, working together to deal with pension and rising health care costs as well as to assure the maintenance of the high level of service the community expects," said Wyro.

During this meeting, Board Member Fred Weil also requested that the MOFD Board meet with the Orinda and Moraga City Councils to discuss items of mutual interest, such as housing density, building height requirements and how it relates to MOFD service. Weil instructed Chief Bradley to seek possible meeting times in January as well as agenda items from both city councils. Weil said he sees these meetings building on themselves with the initial 'tri-agency' meeting being complemented with Orinda/MOFD and Moraga/MOFD as city-specific agenda items come to light.



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## 1000 Fruit Trees For Lamorinda

By Sophie Braccini



The Taylor family in their backyard, which is being readied to receive 20 antique fruit trees through The Urban Farmers project

Photo Siamack Sioshansi

The organization called Urban Farmers, which began the first suburban farming project in Lafayette, now challenges Lamorinda to plant 1000 fruit trees within five years. According to Siamack Sioshansi, the founder of the non-profit group, there are 5 reasons to plant fruit trees. "The first one is to reduce the use of pesticides," says Sioshansi, "peach, pear and apple trees are the most heavily spread trees in our food chain and we want to change that." The second reason is to create an abundance of fruit that can be shared in the community and with those in need. The third reason is that trees are the best tools to extract carbon dioxide from the air and send it back into the soil, the fourth is that Sioshansi hopes that the heirloom fruit's delicious taste will inspire young people to start some type of food industry in the area. And that ties in with the fifth reason, which is to create a link with our own past

when, for example, Moraga became an early exporter of pears.

"As part of our organic local farming project, we have decided to plant antique fruit trees," says Sioshansi. "We will get together to buy these heirlooms at a discount and to transport and plant them at no cost." Sioshansi chose non-commercial varieties because of their hardiness, easy care and the amazing taste of the fruit they produce. "Those are trees that are not planted by commercial farmers today because they prefer fruit that will last longer and will look more consistently the same, rather than great tasting varieties," he explains.

Urban Farmers welcomes all interested residents to join in and choose among the variety of trees that do well in our climate with minimal maintenance. "Some of them are for complete beginners and will require very little work," promises Sioshansi, "and we will continue to give advice on caring and pruning." As an exam-

ple, he explains that if people do not have the ability to prune themselves, it will be very cost effective to get someone to their home for 20 minutes to do the job.

Sioshansi is particularly proud of the community support that has been surrounding the project. "We had many more people volunteering to be part of the farming project than we could take on," he says, "so we decided to create a training



Volunteers working at an urban mini-farm in Lafayette  
Picture courtesy of the Urban Farmers

and support group for those who could not be in the initial project."

Others have contributed to the project in many ways. Soil engineer Dick Strong (Voice of the Soil) has donated his services and so did a local landscaper (The Backyard Food Gardens). Chef Julia Myall is developing recipes for the produce created by the project; a plumbing supply house is helping with the acquisition of necessary supplies; a farmer donated a tractor and farm supplies.

To give back to the community, the Urban Farmers is offering to sell fruit trees at half-price to Lamorinda schools and assisted-living communities, and to give them the help they may need to plant the trees.

The trees will cost homeowners between \$20 and \$25. They have to be ordered by December 20 and will arrive in Lafayette on January 2nd. "The producer is Trees of Antiquity; they give us a 20% discount and will deliver the trees for free to Lafayette." The group plans to have a party in Lafayette that day and to organize the transportation of the bare root trees for those who do not have a truck. Planting and tree care instruction will be available.

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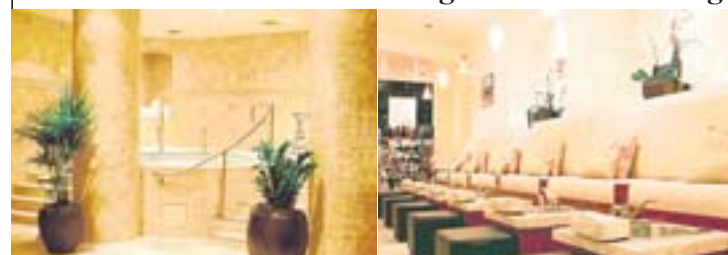
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Sharon Mohorovich with Daisy at the San Marco Nursing and Rehab facility, Walnut Creek  
 Photo Glenn Nosse

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- FAVORITE WALK AND RIDE:** Lafayette Reservoir / My master's mini-van
- OWNER:** Sue Cross, Lafayette, and a member of ARF's "Canine good Citizen."

## Lydon to Narrate Nutcracker

By Lou Fancher



Stacey Yuen - Sugar Plum Fairy  
 Photo provided

It's no coincidence that CAPA, the California Academy of Performing Arts located in Moraga, is run by two veterans. Joan Borchert, artistic director and veteran in the field of dance, and Doyle Borchert, a former commanding officer of one of this country's largest nuclear aircraft carriers, know how to get the troops up and moving. Good thing, because they are about to present their annual Narrated Nutcracker, this year on the Campolindo High School stage, and the logistics are considerable. There are 160 performers, four mid-week school shows, four general audience performances,

half a dozen choreographers, a growing Christmas tree . . . not to mention Kate Lydon, guest narrator and New York City dance celebrity.

Lydon, a former ballerina with the San Francisco Ballet (SFB), has a strong connection to both CAPA and the Nutcracker. "I'm her home teacher," Borchert says, understating the powerful role a skilled first teacher has in the life of a young dancer. The pride comes out as she describes her student's illustrious career: dancing Clara for two seasons with SFB, being selected by Baryshnikov for special training in New York—the list goes on. "She's a luminary in the dance world," Borchert concludes.

Fortunately, Lydon's generosity to the field did not end when she retired from dancing. Now the Editor in Chief of Dance Spirit magazine, she easily agreed to Borchert's request to narrate this year's Nutcracker. It's an important component, providing explanation for young audience members and those unfamiliar with the ballet's fantastic plot. And because the role does not require on-stage interaction with the dancers, Lydon is able to rehearse in New York. Her first "dress rehearsal" will be during the opening school matinee.

It's refreshing to discover

"firsts" in CAPA's seasonal production. The school has been in operation for 29 years: meaning dozens of teachers have trained hundreds of dancers who have danced thousands of hours. It would be easier to spin out the same old song and dance, or even, to close up shop and head for Hawaii. "Not gonna happen," says Borchert immediately. She and her partner have just signed a new ten-year lease to the studios in the Rheem Valley Center and there's no thought of stopping now. Especially with a Nutcracker to produce and the next Kate Lydon to discover and inspire.



Kate Lydon

The Nutcracker is being performed at the Campolindo Performing Arts Center on Dec. 11 and 12 at 7:00 P.M. and on Dec. 12 and 13th at 2:00 P.M. Ticket information is at CAPA's website, [www.capadance.net](http://www.capadance.net), where you can download a ticket form. You can also call CAPA's manager at 707-738-6548.

# SNOW IN LAMORINDA

## Monday Morning Photo Impressions



Photo Doug Kohen



Photo Doug Kohen



Photo Amanda Griggs



Photo Ohlen Alexander



Photo Andy Scheck

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## Businesses on Lafayette Circle Shine for the Holidays

By Sophie Braccini



Lamorinda Music, (LtoR): Janet Stroud (store manager), Emily McCormick, Scott McCormick and Colleen McCormick

As the spirit of the season of giving spreads across the broad boulevards of Lamorinda, on one little side street a group of merchants are organizing some musical fun of their own. Lamorinda Music, Massage Cottage, Lafayette Health Club and The French Bakery invite the community to join them at Lafayette Circle for a Sing-along on Thursday, December 10th from 6:30p.m.-9:00p.m. Remax real estate broker and violinist Mark Shaw, with his string trio, will be there to help

keep us all in tune.

It was Jana Lynn, of the Massage Cottage, who first envisioned the festivities. "I'd been doing this many years ago," she said, "it's a lot of fun, and when I met Mark Shaw at a Chamber event it just clicked and we decided to do it again, with my neighbors on Lafayette Circle."

Guests can enjoy hot cider, pastry samples, and maybe even receive a gift. No worries if you suddenly forget the words. "We will have booklets for the tradi-

tional Christmas songs we will perform," says Shaw. If you plan to attend, the organizers have asked for donations of non-perishable food items. "Don't forget a flash light, your own mug for the hot cider and warm clothing," suggests Lynn.

Among the gifts that will be given out are a couple of one-month free memberships from the Lafayette Health Club, teas from the French Bakery, lessons with some of Lamorinda Music's teachers, massage gift cards from the

Photo: Sophie Braccini

Massage Cottage, a \$100 gift certificate from Sonia's Beauty and Body Salon, and other surprises.

For Colleen McCormick, who opened Lamorinda Music last July, this is a fine example of why she wanted to start a new business in Lafayette, a way to serve and get the community together around her life passion, music. McCormick, who has been a Lafayette resident for 16 years and a science teacher for the Lafayette Art and Science Foundation, personifies the passion for music that runs in her family and that led to the creation of Lamorinda Music. "Mom had other business ideas before this one," recalls Scotty McCormick, a freshman at Acalanes (and a brass player), "but one day when we came home from school and saw a U-Haul full of instruments, books, and partitions in front of the house, we knew this one was serious."

McCormick says the party on the 10th is a way to give back to the community. "We are sponsoring the event to help pay for the musical trio that will be performing," she explains, adding, "We feel so blessed to live in a place that has phenomenal community-sustained music programs, we are proud to be part of it and will support it as much as possible."

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### Green and Greener

## Dreaming of a Green Christmas

Dave Rochlin and Katy Foreman

Well, with Katy on new baby duty, I'm writing this month's holiday-themed column solo.

Most of you know that this is the time of year when consumption hits its peak. The holiday shopping season accounts for as much as 40 percent of annual sales and profits for some retailers, and if you aren't one of the 7 percent of Americans who completed their holiday shopping by Black Friday, you probably still have a whole lot of spending left to do.

So even though your mailbox is filling up with charitable appeals, and thousands of diplomats are convening in Copenhagen this month to try and solve global warming, I'm not going to try and convince you not to shop. I mean hey...Christmas (and Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and Festivus) only comes once a year.

But here are a few thoughts and ideas to keep it green(er) this year, from a reformed holiday spendthrift.

#### Holiday Lights

Over the last decade, I have gradually assembled a fabulous collection of prancing reindeer, waving Santas, glowing snowmen, and other outdoor display lights. I've gotten a bit lazy about putting them up in the last few years...so instead, we now pay a short night time visit to some of the more over-the-top displays that go up every year at the end of Lynwood Drive (in Moraga), and near the country club in Orinda...their 'juice', my joy! I also recall that during the Enron-induced power crisis in 2000, a lot of us did just fine without the lights.

But if you are lighting up (...and of course you are), keep in mind that a typical 60 watt (100 mini-light) string which is left on 24 hours/day for the month of

December uses a total of 44 kwh. This equates to \$5.00 in electricity and 20 lbs of CO2 per string. So use a timer or pull the plug before bed, and cut your power usage by 2/3. If you do your part, I'll even offset the remaining carbon (for up to 6 strings) on your behalf -- and support a carbon project that benefits a few of the two billion people that have no electricity at all. Just email me at "info@climatepath.org" with "carbon neutral lights" as the subject header, and let me know how many strings you've got.

Lastly, if you're shopping for new lights, make the switch to LED. These lights consume almost no electricity at all, saving money and carbon.

#### Gag Gifts

For years, I had a gag gift war going with a few relatives. I estimate that as much as 50% my shopping time was spent locating and purchasing the 'ideal gag gift' that was good for a 30 second chuckle. I also received many similar gifts in retaliation, which were later tossed out or dumped in the back of a closet. These have included everything from singing fish and dancing hamsters to an Easter Island statue inspired tissue box that dispenses Kleenex through its nose.

It takes a tremendous amount of resources to mold and paint plastic, package it, add batteries, and ship the whole thing to the US from China. Some gifts are gifts, but others are just 'stuff'. This year, why not put in more time on thoughtful gifts, and skip the stuff?

#### Travel

If we are "addicted" to oil, then I guess air travel would need to be classified as heroin: Extremely harmful, and yet almost impossible to quit. In terms of personal climate impact, flying is one of the worst things you can do:

Without flying, the average person's carbon footprint in the US is 16 tons. But for the 25% of American who fly (pretty much everyone in Lamorinda), the average footprint is 6 tons higher. And if you are one of the roughly 6 Million 'frequent fliers' in The US, the typical footprint is 40 tons - almost triple the average. Yikes!

Flying is especially harmful because the emissions are released much further up in the atmosphere. Even if you aren't flying somewhere for the holidays, you will probably be driving...a lot. Once again, I'm not going to try and convince you not to travel. But do practice smoother driving and inflate your tires properly to bump up your mileage. Going 65 mph on your way to Tahoe gets you stuck putting on chains at Applegate a whopping 15 minutes later than by going 75.

As always, you should also consider offsetting your remaining emissions. You can consider it the moral and practical equivalent of Methadone -- a safe way to gradually withdraw from your oil addiction, rather than quitting cold turkey. Or better yet, just think of it as a tax deductible way to help others while reducing the impact of your good cheer.

Katy Foreman is a committed environmentalist who lives in Lafayette, and Dave Rochlin is a lazy environmentalist who lives in Moraga. Together they operate ClimatePath. Individuals and businesses can measure and then reduce their carbon footprints through tax deductible donations that support carbon reduction activities, renewable energy project, and forestry initiatives around the world at [www.climatepath.org](http://www.climatepath.org)

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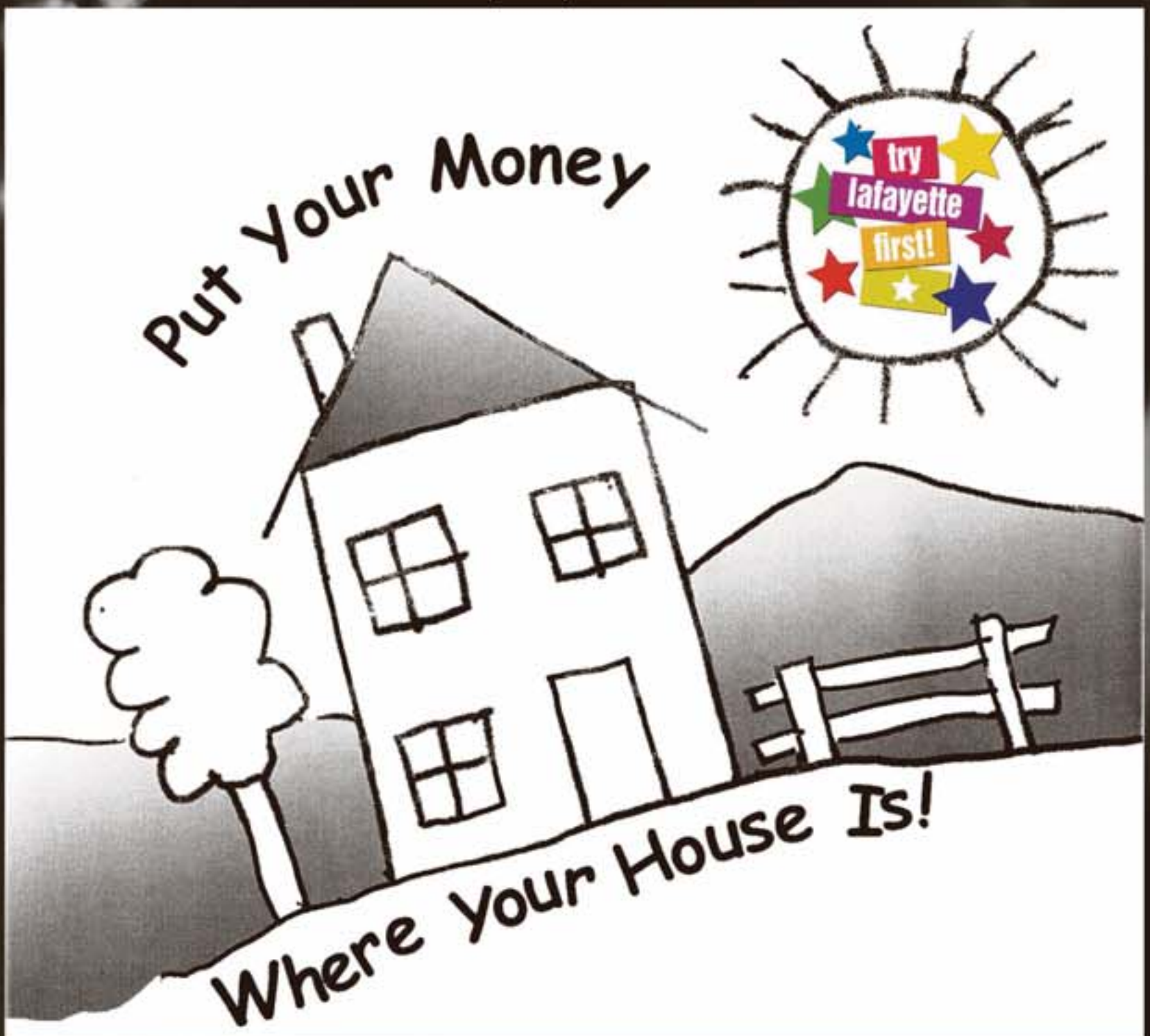
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# Lamorinda Schools

## SCHOOL CALENDAR

### School Governing Board Meetings

#### Acalanes Union

High School District  
Board Room AUHSD Office  
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette  
• Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2009 at 7:30 pm  
• AUHSD Special Board-Annual Reorganization Meeting, 5:30-5:45 pm  
• Special Meeting:  
Adult Education Program Update / Del Valle Master Plan, 6:30-7:30 pm  
• Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2010 at 7:30 pm

#### Lafayette School District

LAFSD Office  
3477 School Street, Lafayette  
Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2009 at 7 pm  
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, Dec. 14, 2009 at 4:00pm

## Del Rey School Fire

By Andrea A. Firth



Firefighter entering the portable

Photo Jim Boucher

The suspected cause of the fire in a portable classroom at the Del Rey Elementary School in Orinda was determined to be an electrical problem associated with the heating and cooling system, according to Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Fire Marshall Mike Mentink. No students or teaching staff were on the school campus in the early morning hours the day before Thanksgiving, when firefighters from the MOFD were alerted to a problem at the site through the school's fire alarm system.

"Everyone is relieved that it occurred during a time when the classroom and school was not occupied," states Jerry Bucci, Director of Business Services for the Orinda Union School District (OUSD). "The firefighters, school custodian, and OUSD maintenance staff who arrived first, quickly controlled the situation to prevent any additional damage," he

adds.

The portable building at Del Rey, one of 15 portable classroom buildings the District has at various school sites, had been leased from a portable classroom supplier. According to Bucci, the lease company has accepted responsibility for the costs related to the fire, and the damaged portable will be replaced with a new portable building this week. In addition, the lease company's technicians and the OUSD maintenance department have inspected other portable classrooms similar to the one at Del Rey to detect and rectify any other problems.

While fatalities from school fires are rare, just over half of school fires occur between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., hours when students and staff are most likely to be at school, according to data from the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), a part of the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA).

"Schools are relatively low risk from a life safety perspective," states Fire Marshall Mentink. When schools are occupied, everyone is awake, adult supervision is present, there are exits to the outside nearby, and evacuation drills are routinely conducted, he explains. "All schools in the OUSD conduct fire drills on a monthly basis," says Bucci, and he adds that these drills include all classrooms, portables, and other occupied areas like administrative offices.

While the majority of school fires occur outdoors on school property, structure fires account for approximately 42% of all school fires, according to USFA data. The leading cause of school structure fires is incendiary/suspicious activity, which includes arson fires, and accounts for 37% of all school structure fires and 52% of middle and high school structure fires. There has not been a significant arson-related fire at a school in the MOFD service area, notes Mentink.

Schools are governed by strict inspection and fire/life safety codes that require sprinkler and other fire/smoke alarm systems, so school structure fires are usually contained quickly and are generally less damaging than fires in other types of nonresidential buildings. The fire at Del Rey School was under control in about 15 minutes. The damage was confined to the portable, which sustained an estimated \$18,000 in damage and \$2,000 in content loss.

## Holden High School Turns Forty

By Cristina Kim



Emma Harwayne (in the turquoise sweater) smiles for the camera during her Algebra class

Photo Cristina Kim

Nestled in the hills of Orinda, Holden High School (Holden) is one of Lamorinda's best kept secrets. Holden is a private school located right next to the Orinda Community Church. Although few Lamorinda residents are aware of this alternative high school, Holden is celebrating its fortieth anniversary this year. Founded in 1969, the school was built to provide a place where students who were not excelling in traditional school settings could succeed. According to Kristin Lamoureux, one of the school's co-directors, Holden was created in order to inspire students who, at other schools, would "just go through the motions." Today the school still reaches out to students who feel that their current schools are not a good fit but have the potential to achieve success with more personal attention.

The school currently has 35 students from all over the Bay Area; about 50 percent hail from Contra Costa County. Individual class sizes are small and allow students and teachers to build very close relationships that break power hierarchies. For instance, students are encouraged address teachers and counselors by their first names.

Although it may seem like a minor detail, allowing students to address their teachers by their first names is part of the greater ethos of the school. Holden is dedicated to building autonomous students.

Emma Harwayne, a senior at Holden, believes that the smaller

classes are more personal and really enjoys that at Holden, "teachers are equals." Harwayne feels that establishing relationships with teachers and other adults that are not based on power hierarchies helps her and other students "in the real world." She has recently been applying for jobs and feels that viewing adults as her equals boosts her confidence and allows her to feel comfortable in job interviews. Harwayne also shares that, at Holden, she has learned "to be independent as opposed to listening to a group of friends," which has truly transformed her life. "I have learned more here in two years than in the three years that I spent in public school," she concludes.

Lamoureux feels that Holden's success as a school is based on the fact that, first and foremost, it is a caring community. The school has a weekly community

meeting in which students and teachers meet and discuss classes, address issues and celebrate student and teacher achievements. Holden also provides students with weekly Resource and Support (R&S) sessions in which students talk with Marriage and Family Therapists. Lamoureux believes that "students are more engaged learners if they have a say in what they are learning," and that listening to students in the community meetings and in the R&S sessions allows students to take ownership of their education.

The school has a rigorous curriculum that resembles any other high school. Students are expected to take English, Social Science, Math, Science, and Art courses, and must also take community college classes their junior year. Many Holden alumni continue their educations in four-year liberal arts colleges, community colleges or vocational schools. Each graduating class is very different, but the transitional counselor and other faculty help individual students achieve their post-graduation goals.

Lamoureux projects that the school will grow in the future to accommodate more students and provide even more resources. Under the current economic climate the school, which relies on some external funding to provide financial aid to students, has put growth plans on temporary hold. Instead, Holden is continuing to focus on its students and to plan for its 40th Anniversary Bash and fundraiser this March.



Kristin Lamoureux in the commons room at Holden High School Photo Cristina Kim

## Campolindo Math Teacher Honored

By Jean Follmer



Nita Madra Photo provided

Campolindo High School math and physics teacher Nita Madra was recently awarded the prestigious Edyth May Sliffe Award for Distinguished High School Mathematics Teaching. The Math-

ematical Association of America (MAA) presents the award in recognition of math teachers who have made a significant contribution to the success of the highest-scoring teams in the annual American Mathematics Contest (AMC 12).

Madra is one of only 23 teachers to receive this honor in 2009. Only teachers from the top 60 highest-scoring AMC 12 teams from the United States, Canada, APO/FPO and U. S. Embassy schools are eligible for nomination. Out of a pool of 4,000 teachers, Madra is thrilled with the recognition. "I feel fortunate to be working at a school where the students are not just motivated to do well, but are also willing to go the extra mile to excel," said Madra.

The Campolindo community shares her enthusiasm. "Nita Madra is an outstanding math and science teacher. She gives selflessly of her time and energy, not only in the classroom, but outside the classroom as well," said Campolindo principal Carol Kitchens.

The award honors the request of Edyth May Sliffe, a former math teacher in Emeryville, California. Sliffe led many successful teams to the AMC 12. While the students were recognized for their efforts, she realized that the math teachers themselves were lacking recognition for the time and effort they contributed to the success of the team. Sliffe made the award possible by leaving the bulk of her estate to the MAA upon her death.

## How Six Figure Income Families Get Thousands of Dollars in Free Money For College

Local man teaches free workshops to help parents save thousands in process

Moraga---East Bay parents that are planning on sending a child to college in the next few years, but aren't quite sure how to pay for it can now rest a little easier. Gerna Benz of Bay Area College Planners has been educating families in the community for over 15 years.

'It's really sad, but most parents that we talk to have done real well financially, but never found the time to save for college, and now they're facing a bill of \$18,000-\$45,000 a year, and they don't know who to turn to,' he says. 'Further, most of the time, all they hear is to not even bother applying for any aid because they make too much money. However, most of the time, that is simply not true even if they make a six-figure income.'

Gerna would know, because his group has worked with over 1400 families in the last 10 years ranging from single moms to corporate CEO's, and they say they can help anyone get through the process and save a bundle.... no matter how good of a student they have or how much money they make.

'I got started in this because I was a very good student, but no one told us anything about how to access money for college, or even how to pick a career...so I didn't go right away. But, I vowed that I would learn the process and devote my time to helping families not fall into the same trap that we did. 'Simply put, we show parents the truth that they aren't hearing anywhere else about how the college process really works and save thousands of dollars in the process.'

Lamorinda parents will have an opportunity

to hear Gerna speak. He is teaching his class 'How to Give Your Kid a 4-Year College Education Without Going Broke!' on Saturday December 12th at the Moraga Library located at 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga, CA 94556 from 11:00am-12:15pm.

'We'll discuss everything from the greatest myths about the college process, to how to send your student to a fancy private school for less than the cost of a junior college...it'll be like learning how to get a brand new Lexus for the price of a used pick up truck,' he grins.

Topics will also include why private scholarships and 529 plans are a waste of time, how to double or even triple the amount of free money you receive from each school, and how to avoid the one mistake that will kill your chances of getting any money at all that almost every other parent will make this coming January, and much, much more.

'They will learn a ton, and I do my best to make the class fun,' he says. 'It's like I'm giving them a super bright flash light to navigate a pitch black cave, while all the other parents continue to stumble around blindly! 'Don't forget: the class is totally free, but seats are limited. Also, we are not sure when we will be teaching these classes in the East Bay again since my December and January calendars are already filling up, so come on out and see me.' You can reserve a seat online at [www.baycollegeplanners.com](http://www.baycollegeplanners.com) or by calling our 24 hour reservation line at (877) 924-3726.

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## The \$Cost\$ of Absence

By Jean Follmer

Excused, unexcused, sickness or vacation – the reason behind a student's absence is irrelevant when it comes to district funding. The biggest portion of a school district's funding comes from the State of California. Computing the student enrollment and average daily attendance (ADA) during the current year and applying them to a statewide formula determine the amount of funding received from the State next year. Declining enrollment and student absences can both contribute to lower funding from the State in the next school year.

"When kids are in their seats, we get paid; when they're not, we don't. A student absence costs the District about \$48 in revenue," said Lafayette District Superintendent Dr. Fred Brill. "That figure is very similar in Orinda," said Orinda Union School District Director of Business Services, Jerry Bucci.

The only exception to the rule is a pre-arranged absence of five days or more. In those cases, teachers prepare the classwork and homework to be completed during the absence so the student is not actually missing days of instruction. The district does receive state funding for these pre-arranged absences.

In short, districts want students in school unless they're just too sick to be there. Given the current fiscal crisis, the 2-3 day trip to Disneyland is frowned upon even more because it takes more money out of the district coffers next year. With exorbitant budget cuts looming, districts don't have any money to spare. Some parents do write checks to their district when their children are absent. Although the practice isn't discouraged, it's not required and it doesn't increase the ADA that goes into the calculation for the following school year.

Although districts don't want sick students in school, those absences still cost the district valuable dollars. For instance, the flu season has impacted many districts around the country this year. In Lamorinda, preliminary indications show our attendance has also been adversely impacted. "There have been isolated periods of time at some schools where it appears that sickness has resulted in lower attendance," said Bucci. Bucci indicated attendance numbers are only preliminary at this point and will be finalized at the end of this month. However, he's taking note of them. "I'm certainly being more conservative in my projections for funding next year," continued Bucci. Bucci said parents are being more cautious and keeping their children home when they're sick. Ultimately, this cuts down on absences since fewer students become stricken with illness.

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## The Admissions Shift in California State University

By Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D.

The California State University is the largest system of higher education in the country, with 23 campuses, approximately 450,000 students and 48,000 faculty and staff. Since its founding in 1961 the system has awarded nearly 2.5 million degrees. Its mission is to provide high-quality, affordable education to meet the ever changing needs of the people of California. With its commitment to excellence, diversity and innovation, "Cal State" is the university system that has provided a valuable infrastructure for public education in California for nearly 50 years.

Unfortunately, the Cal State system is in serious trouble. Cal State campuses are shifting from non-competitive admissions to competitive ones. So getting admitted to one of the 23 CSU campuses will continue to become more "iffy" for many college applicants—especially students who are attracted to certain campuses and majors. The shift is not the result of a change in State philosophy. Instead the change is driven by deep cuts in the State's budget which have led the university's leadership to curtail enrollment at a time of rising demand. Due to the economic downturn more students than ever are turning to the less expensive state system to meet their higher education needs.

Consider the following:

- Cal State applications have risen over 19% from last year. Approximately 600,000 applications are expected for fall 2010. Officials attribute the surge to many factors; these include an increase in community college transfer applications, concerns over cost-cutting measures that are expected to slash enrollment by 40,000 students over the next two years, and the increasing difficulty of being accepted to the University of California.
- Last year two-thirds of Cal State applicants were admitted; that ratio is expected to decline for fall 2010.
- Last year six of the 23 campuses

were "impacted" (more qualified applicants than space). This year 12 campuses are "impacted" and that number is expected to rise.\*

- Last year only 6 campuses stopped accepting applications by the November 30th deadline; as of this writing 17 are closed for applications and some campuses are establishing waiting lists.

The crux of the situation is that "impacted" campuses will require additional admission criteria that go beyond the basic requirements of grades and test scores originally designed to guarantee a place in the Cal State system for many California high school graduates. These new standards are likely to include: favoring students who live nearby or who live at home, thus easing the strain on campus housing; adding extra admissions requirements for "impacted" majors (such as nursing, engineering and business); and generally raising the bar for overall admission requiring higher grades and test scores that are combined into an Eligibility Index.\*\*

In light of all these changes, current high school students who plan to apply to a Cal State campus will need an admissions strategy. Here are some basic suggestions:

- Students in 10th and 11th grades should take greater care to achieve good grades and higher SAT or ACT test scores. Rigor of the coursework is important as well.
- As students prepare a college list, they should think carefully about the majors they want to pursue. Academic aspirations must take priority over campus location preferences. In other words, the availability of a major or program of interest and the academic requirements necessary to pursue it must supersede the student's desire to attend a particular Cal State campus.
- Students and their families should look carefully at colleges outside the Cal State system, in part because the average time it takes to

graduate may increase over the coming years. Six-year graduation rates are already low at many campuses. (e.g. 61% of entering freshmen at San Diego State graduate in 6 years.)

- When considering the costs of attending college, be sure to include the costs involved in added years of paying tuition and fees as well as the loss of potential earnings. Once these are added to the equation, the cost of an education at some private colleges might be more attractive. Many private institutions have financial aid policies targeted toward making attendance more affordable for middle class families.

While I am definitely not discouraging students from applying to Cal State, I am strongly suggesting that that students carefully research every school they apply to and make informed decisions. Shop wisely when your precious education dollars are at stake.

\* Detailed information about impacted campuses, programs and majors can be accessed at [www.calstate.edu/impactinfo.shtml](http://www.calstate.edu/impactinfo.shtml).

\*\* Visit [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu) for up-to-date information on the Cal State system, including how to calculate the Eligibility Index.



Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. is an independent college admissions advisor located in Lafayette, California. Her goal is to help students and their families understand the college admissions process, research college and career options, create a college list and prepare a strong, organized and cohesive application. Dr. LaScala is a member of NACAC, WACAC, and HECA and earned a certification in College Admissions and Career Planning from University of California at Berkeley. Contact her at (925) 891-4491 or [elizabeth@doingcollege.com](mailto:elizabeth@doingcollege.com).

## Jewish Day School Opens New Building

Submitted by Craig Issod



New building of the Contra Costa Jewish Day School

Photo Andy Schreck

Ten years of vision came to fruition when the Contra Costa Jewish Day School (CCJDS) opened the doors of its new school building to students for this school year. CCJDS celebrated with a grand opening ceremony on Sunday, December 6th in Lafayette.

The new CCJDS school building is part of a \$9 million "Phase 1" capital campaign that was launched nearly three years ago. The ceremony was an opportunity to honor the many generous supporters who have collectively pledged nearly \$8.3 million to provide CCJDS with this state-of-the-art facility. Even in these uncertain economic times, CCJDS has raised over 90% of its goal.

Until this year, CCJDS was the only Jewish day school in the entire Bay Area without a permanent home. CCJDS had previously leased classrooms from Temple Isaiah. But with enrollment growing from 21 students in 2001 to 127 today, CCJDS was literally bursting at the seams. The new facility increases the capacity for enrollment to 180 students.

"Our entire community has banded together to create the first Jewish Day School in Central Contra Costa County, thereby ensuring a strong Jewish future as we educate the future leaders of synagogues, federa-

tions, and many other Jewish organizations," says Karla Smith, one of the CCJDS founders and Campaign Chair. "We are close to completing our funding goal for 'Phase 1' and then we hope to continue our master-plan of a

children's play area and gymnasium."

CCJDS is fortunate to have had support from around the entire Bay Area, including from San Francisco, Marin and the Peninsula.

## Orinda Schools Recognized by Business

Submitted by Kathy Frenklach, OUSD

The Orinda Union School District announced on December that Del Rey, Glorietta, OIS, Sleepy Hollow and Wagner Ranch schools have been selected by California Business for Education Excellence (CBEE) Scholar Schools; five of the 1,304 public schools in California to receive the title of 2009 Honor Roll school.

Schools receiving this distinction from California's business community have demonstrated consistent high student academic

achievement and have made significant progress toward closing achievement gaps among all their students. The CBEE Honor Roll is made up of two different awards, the Star Schools Award (395 schools) and Scholar Schools Award (909 schools). CBEE Scholar Schools are schools that are showing significant levels of academic achievement, but do not have a significant socio-economically disadvantaged student population.

"The Orinda School District

is proud of our continued recognition by the business community honoring the outstanding academic achievement of all five of our schools, said Dr. Joe Jaconette, school district superintendent. "Our teachers, staff, school board and parents partner to support our students in their quest for excellence. We appreciate the work by the Educational Foundation of Orinda (EFO) and our school parent clubs to help fund programs in an era of extreme financial uncertainty."

## Girl Scouts Expecting Special Visitor

Submitted by Cara Helberg



Troop 31061 raises funds for Viktor's visit

Photo provided

Girl Scouts from Lafayette and Pleasant Hill have been

working hard on raising money through their annual nut and candy

sales to bring an orphaned nine-year old boy from Ukraine to California for an extra special Christmas. Viktor, a 9-year old little boy who has lived in an orphanage for most of his life, will be meeting the troop on December 16th when they greet him at the San Francisco Airport. The girls are very excited to meet Viktor and to be a part of making his Christmas an extra special one. Little Viktor is orphaned and the troop has high hopes he will also meet a family who might adopt him and become his forever family before he returns to Ukraine in January. Troop 31061 will have its final fundraising bake sale on December 9th and 10th at Valhalla Elementary in Pleasant Hill. For more information on how you can help Viktor, please contact Cara Helberg at [adoptkids@comcast.net](mailto:adoptkids@comcast.net).

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# Community Service

## Kiwanis Lends a Hand at Rheem School

Submitted by Leslie Engler



Photo provided

Fifteen members of Moraga Valley Kiwanis recently volunteered over 150 hours installing an irrigation system at the Rheem Elementary School garden. The project, chaired by Kiwanian Jason Evans coordinating with teacher Alice Noyes, provided a water source to each of five raised planter beds, an orchard area and hillside planted with succulents and native plant species. This is one of several community volunteer efforts that have transformed the area from an asphalt slab into an outdoor learning center.

The project meshed perfectly with Kiwanis goals of making a difference in the lives of children. The name "Kiwanis" was coined from an American Indian expression

which means "we trade" or "we share our talents."

The Kiwanis project at the Rheem School garden entailed running the electrical lines to the manifold, installing valves for five stations, digging the trenches for the piping, running the piping from the raised planters to the irrigation valves and installing risers with hose bibs providing water to each planter and the hillside. The project called upon many skills of the members to be able to complete the work.

Last spring Kiwanis members installed drip irrigation on a hillside at the rear of Camino Pablo School providing water to native plants that had been planted to stabilize the hillside.

In addition to hands on projects, the Club contributes through the Moraga Kiwanis Club Foundation to many local agencies that directly impact the lives of children. The Club raises funds in many ways, including staffing the concession stands at Saint Mary's women's and men's home athletic events, selling refreshments at Moraga's July 4th celebration, staffing the LPGA Golf tournament, hosting an annual Crab Feed, participating in the Moraga Pear Festival, and an Escript program through Safeway.

For more information on Moraga Valley Kiwanis, visit the website at [www.MoragavalleyKiwanis.org](http://www.MoragavalleyKiwanis.org) or contact Tim Freeman at 283-5945.

We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions can be sent to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com) with the subject header In Service to the Community.

## Tree Lighting at Moraga Commons

Submitted by Denise Lemings



Dianne Wilson reads a poem at the Commons Park in memory and honor of her son Colin Wilson and others during Hospice of the East Bay's Tree Lighting Ceremony in Moraga

Photo provided

According to the Hospice of the East Bay, "The Tree of Lights is a way for families to celebrate and memorialize the lives of their friends and loved ones." Moraga Mayor David Trotter spoke with thanksgiving for having Hospice of the East Bay as part of the community and recognized the community being supportive of

Hospice services. Girl Scouts brought homemade cookies and hot chocolate for the brisk night that was enjoyed by all. Local boy scouts built a safe bonfire that lit the faces of those huddled around it as friends and families of loved ones were remembered and the Moraga Community Choir sang a capella.

## Lafayette Kids Host "Alex's Lemonade Stand"

Submitted by Jennifer Aaker



Tea Sloane Smith works on the sign for Alex's Lemonade Stand

Photo provided

In an effort to join the battle against childhood cancer, young Lafayette residents Sophie and Cole Foster along with Cooper, Devon and Tea Sloane Smith, hosted an Alex's Lemonade Stand on Saturday, November 21st, raising over \$1000.

The local children were inspired to get involved with Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation after hearing about foundation creator Alexandra "Alex" Scott on twitter. After finding out how easy it was to get involved, they decided to hold a lemonade stand of their own.

The five children planned a yellow-themed event complete with yellow shirts, hats, banners and balloons, and even chose 'yellow' songs for a DJ dance party to create ambiance for the stand (think "Here Comes the Sun"). In addition to the lemonade stand, the young partici-

pants' parents donated a matching set of proceeds to other social-good charities.

Some of the kids helped determine the other beneficiaries. Tea Sloane wished to "make everyone princesses in the whole wide world." She thinks that everyone should have a life that is a bit more pink and glittery, like a princess. Her donation will go to the Make a Wish Foundation.

(<http://www.wish.org/>). Cooper wanted to give to the poor, because he feels that money would be helpful for impoverished people who have none; Kiva will benefit from this donation (<http://www.kiva.org/>). Devon is very worried about the people who have swine flu and can't go to school and have to stay home. Donors Choose will be his beneficiary (<http://www.donorschoose.org/>).

(<http://www.donorschoose.org/>).

Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation (ALSF) emerged from the front yard lemonade stand of cancer patient Alexandra "Alex" Scott (1996-2004). At the age of 4, Alex announced that she wanted to hold a lemonade stand to raise money to help find a cure for all children with cancer. Since Alex held that first stand, the Foundation bearing her name has evolved into a national fundraising movement, complete with thousands of volunteers across the country carrying on her legacy of hope. To date, Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, a registered 501(c)3 charity, has raised more than \$25 million towards fulfilling Alex's dream of finding a cure, funding over 100 research projects nationally. For more information, visit <http://www.alexlemonade.org/>.



Sophie, Cole, Coop and Devon and Tea Sloane staff their Alex's lemonade stand

Photo provided

## Peter Pan Foundation Holiday Show

Submitted by Laura Kastigar



David Patty (Acalanes, Lafayette) and Brooke Lyness (Campolindo, Moraga)

The Peter Pan Foundation will present its original holiday show, 'Twas the Opening Night Before Christmas', the weekend of December 19th-20th in Danville. Proceeds will benefit Oakland's Children's Hospital.

This holiday musical was written and arranged by Lafayette native Leslie Noel in collaboration with Riley Sbrana. Noel is the show's director/musical director, and Sbrana is the teen assistant director. The show is produced by Jon Leyden. 'Twas the Opening Night Before Christmas' is great entertainment for the whole family. The cast includes over 100 performers ages 8 to adult, several of whom attend schools in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda.

The Peter Pan Foundation is a non-profit organization founded by Leslie Noel in 2007. The goals of the foundation are best summarized in the organization's vision: *The Peter Pan Foundation is to inspire children of all ages to find and reach their personal potential by instilling confidence, character and creativity while teaching philanthropy through fundraising, financial, emotional outreach and the arts.*

Through the Peter Pan Foundation, Noel has led the efforts of hundreds of local youth ages 8 to 25 in philanthropic activities: Kids helping kids, by using their musical, dance and acting talents to entertain and raise money for local charities. The Foundation has donated over \$50,000 to Children's Hospital Oakland, all from proceeds from its musical productions. The local community has long-supported the Peter Pan Foundation shows. This season's production will delight the whole family and help the Peter Pan Foundation assist local kids in need this holiday season.

Tickets are \$20 for adults; \$10 for youth 18 and under. Tickets may be purchased on-line at [www.peterpanfoundation.org](http://www.peterpanfoundation.org).



Caroline Whelehan and Reed Rembac (Stanley Middle School, Lafayette)

Photos provided by Leslie Noel

*'Twas the Opening Night Before Christmas*  
Where: San Ramon Valley High School, 501 Danville Blvd, Danville  
When: Saturday, December 19th, 1:00 p.m. (junior cast) and 7:00 p.m. Sunday, December 20th, 1:00 p.m. (junior cast) and 7:00 p.m.



# SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS



## Lamorinda Girls' Basketball Preview

By Conrad Basset



Campolindo's Meghan Ringer (#44) averaged 11 points and seven rebounds last year



Annie Ward (#23) led the Campolindo women in scoring last season



The Acalanes women opened the pre-season strong

Diablo Foothill Athletic League will be one of the toughest leagues for girl's basketball in California this season. Three teams are rated amongst the top in the state—Campolindo, Dublin and Dougherty Valley.

Campolindo finished 22-6 a year ago and lost starters Steph Triggas and Kelly Thomas to graduation, but Coach Clay Kallam returns several key players including Annie Ward Southern Utah-bound Meghan Ringer. Ringer averaged 11 points and seven rebounds a year

ago and Ward led the team in scoring at 13 points per game.

Amanda Forshay returns for her junior season and brings ten points and six rebounds a game from last year. Also coming back are Rose Fruci, Mallory Brown, and Mana and Mojan Azarni, who were solid contributors in each game.

Newcomers include sophomore Annelise Ito, juniors Erin Nakahara, Ruthie Shapiro, and Meggie Nelson as well as freshman Laura Hickey.

Campolindo is slotted to play in two strong tournaments—the Nike Invitational in Phoenix and the local West Coast Jamboree. Both are highly regarded tournaments that feature some of the best prep teams and players in the nation.

Campolindo opened its non-league schedule at home with a 68-43 win against Terra Linda. Ward and Ringer led the team in scoring with 14 and 11 points respectively.

Lamorinda rival Miramonte looks to challenge Campolindo's



The Miramonte girls' basketball team, under new head coach Kelly Sopak, looks to challenge Campolindo's dominance this season. Photo Jordan Fong

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The Lady Mats walloped Hercules 70-30 in their opener behind Golden's 16 points along with senior Kristine Miller's 14 and junior Liza Katz's 10.

The Matadors will also spend time on the road playing in the Surf 'N Slam tournament in San Diego; they will also travel north to compete in a tournament in Healdsburg.

In Lafayette, Corrie Mizusawa returns at the helm of the Dons. Acalanes also went on to last year's NCS tournament and finished with a 14-13 overall record.

The Lady Dons no longer have their starting backcourt of Ashlie Neff and Laura Wagstaff, and this year's team will be a blend of experience and newcomers.

Coach Mizusawa expects strong contributions from returning juniors Kiara Harewood and Sam Cheng, senior Jamie Horn, and sophomore Sophie Taylor. She also expects that her three freshmen, Molly Martin, Jamie Jacobs and Marie Paladino will be

part of the mix.

She agreed that, "It will be a battle every night because the quality of talent in the DFAL is so high."

The Dons opened their pre-season run with two wins, over Ygnacio Valley, 66-29, and a close win over Analj, 57-56. The Dons finished second in their own Acalanes Classic, falling to Vanden in the final.

In addition to hosting a tournament, Acalanes will leave the state to travel to Reno for the Bully's Winter Classic.

Around the rest of the DFAL, Dougherty Valley (18-10 a year ago with no seniors) will be very experienced and Dublin went 23-7 including a trip to the Northern California tournament. They return several players and an outstanding transfer from Sacred Heart Cathedral. Las Lomas and Alhambra, who both went 1-11 in the league a year ago, will look to spoil the season for someone.

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# SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS



## Gaels Undefeated on Road

Saint Mary's outlasts San Jose, Utah State

By Justine Sgalio

The Saint Mary's Gaels secured their first road win of the season on November 30th with a 78-71 second half comeback victory against the San Jose State Spartans at Walt McPherson Court.

Saint Mary's senior guard Wayne Hunter scored the game's first field goal just seven seconds into the game, but the Spartans held onto the lead the rest of the half, gaining their largest advantage after a lay-up by senior guard Mac Peterson with 1:51 to go in the half, 43-27.

Junior forward C.J. Webster had 12 points in the half and junior center Chris Oakes had 10, spearheading the Spartans' early lead and contributing to San Jose State's 12 point half-time advantage over the Gaels.

The Gaels shot just 20 percent from the 3-point line and 40.6 percent overall in the first half, compared to San Jose's 59.4 percent total field goal percentage.

"I think we started off slow," said Saint Mary's senior guard Wayne Hunter. "Our defense just wasn't there, and if you don't play defense, you don't win games."

The second half brought a turn-around defensive effort by the Gaels and a ten point run early in the half led by senior forward Ben Allen, senior center Omar Samhan and junior guard Mickey McConnell. The three racked up a

combined ten points in just over three minutes while holding the Spartans scoreless on defense.

The Gaels took the lead with 11:42 to go in the game after a 3-pointer by freshman guard Matthew Dellavedova making it 54-52. San Jose State briefly regained the lead with 9:19 left to play, but the Gaels continued their offensive momentum and with 2:51 to go in the game had a nine point advantage over the Spartans.

San Jose State came within four points of the Gaels with 1:27 left in the game, but strong post defense and field goals by Saint Mary's Samhan and Dellavedova and foul shots by McConnell secured the Gaels' comeback win.

"We didn't panic," said Saint Mary's Head Coach Randy Bennett. "That is why we won the game. We kept our composure and we hit big shots."

Saint Mary's defeated the Utah State Aggies 68-63 in Logan on Saturday. A 3-pointer by freshman forward Clint Steindl with 36 seconds to go in the game secured the win for the Gaels at Dee Glen Smith Spectrum. The win ended a 37-game home winning streak for Utah State—a statistic the Aggies have maintained since 2007.

The Gaels are currently 6-1 and head to Eugene this weekend to take on the Pac-10's Oregon Ducks (4-3).

## Saint Mary's Volleyball Competes in Postseason

Gaels Defeat UCSB, Fall to Stanford



Lauren Corp led the Gaels with 25 kills, a career-high, in Saint Mary's loss to Stanford



Alita Fisher notched 26 digs for the Gaels against Stanford Photos Tod Fierner

After a record-setting season, the Gaels competed in the NCAA tournament on Friday, December 4th. No. 21 Saint Mary's (22-4) took on the University of California, Santa Barbara (22-8) in the first round. Saint Mary's got off to a slow start against the Gauchos, dropping the first two sets 24-26, 22-25 before coming back in dramatic fashion taking the next three games, 25-20, 25-14, 13-15. The Gaels were

led by freshman outside hitter Lauren Corp who notched 14 kills. Saint Mary's has not won a match in the post season since 2004 when the team advanced to the sweet sixteen.

Saint Mary's faced Stanford on their home floor on Saturday, December 5th. The Gaels took on the Cardinal earlier in the season and lost 3-1. While the Gaels were unable to defeat the Cardinal, the team forced the

match to five sets. Saint Mary's took the first set 25-21 before dropping the next two 21-25, 22-25. The Gaels won the fourth set, 26-24, before losing in the fifth set, 13-15. Saint Mary's was again led by Corp in a stellar offensive effort. Corp led the team with 25 kills, a career-high. Senior libero Alita Fisher also added 26 digs for the Gaels.

Head coach Rob Browning said of the game, "We are

disappointed it didn't end our way last night. The girls knew that they could win and they played like they would win so it was heartbreaking in that sense. We are very proud of how our girls played. It's too bad we couldn't win but we are really proud of ourselves."

The Gaels finished the season with a 23-4 overall record, the second best in Saint Mary's history. C. Graveson



Ben Allen was one of three Gaels to spark a comeback in the second half against SJSU Photo Tod Fierner

**Send sports stories and ideas to:**  
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# Acalanes Soccer Off to a Perfect Start

*Dons Win Winter Classic*  
Submitted by Nancy Kaplan



Dylan Autran scores the second goal

Photo Andy Schreck

On Saturday, December 5th, the Dons braved the cold weather to defeat Clayton Valley, 2-0. With the victory the Dons captured the Winter Soccer Classic Championship (Silver Division). The first goal came just

before half time on a penalty kick from Nic Carrillo. Ten minutes into the second half a long free kick from Jacob Carroll, prolonged by David Kloth, found Dylan Autran in the box for the second and final goal of the

game. The Dons are now 4-0-0. Game stats: Goal #1 Carrillo (PK) - 40'; Goal #2, Autran assist Carroll & Kloth - 50'; Acalanes Goalie Spittler, Saves - 1; Clayton Valley Goalie Nelson, Saves -2.



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# Second Annual LMYA All-Star's Commissioner's Cup

*Sportsmanship, Commitment and Cross Town Rivalry*

Submitted by Allyn Oh

On November 21st LMYA hosted a cross town rivalry weekend for its soccer teams. The Annual LMYA Commissioner's Cup was created to highlight sportsmanship, coaches and players' commitment and promote healthy rivalry between Moraga and Lafayette. The Cup was held at

Campolindo High School giving players a chance to play on a full flat field amidst stadium bleachers. The all day event pitted third through eighth grade boys' and girls' teams from Lafayette against Moraga.

The cities split victories, each with three victories. In the third-fourth grade girls' match-

up Lafayette came away with the 2-0 win. Moraga took the third-fourth grade boys' game, 3-2. Lafayette cleaned up at the fifth-sixth grade level, the girls won 3-0 and the boys won 4-0. Moraga came back in the afternoon to take the seventh-eighth grade games for both boys and girls with a 2-1 victory and a 4-

1 victory, respectively. The boys' 2-1 victory came from penalty kicks.

Moraga boys' seventh-eighth grade team gave their head coach Cliff Lehman a last hoorah with the victory. Lehman has coach LMYA soccer for 14 years and the Commissioner's Cup was his last game.



Lafayette's Simon Oh (#2) and Beniam Huff (#4) work for a shot in the U10 boys' competition

Photo Allyn Oh

# Encinal Ends Mats' Unforgettable Playoff Run

...continued from page 1

In his second year as a Matador, Miramonte sophomore quarterback Ross Anderson threw for just 104 yards, making 7 of 14 passes. Anderson also ran for 84 yards on 17 touches in Miramonte's upset win. "It feels great just to get revenge on them after every year they've beaten us. And to shut them out, too. Our defense just played great. It was awesome," Anderson remarked after the game.

With the win, Miramonte traveled to Encinal to continue their run toward the Championship.

The Jets struck first just 2:15 into the opening quarter on captain and senior running back Abraham Amiri's one-yard run, and the home team went up 7-0.

Matador Coupin was fired up following the Jet touchdown. Shortly afterward, Coupin made an attempt to fight some of the Jets defenders but was prevented by teammates.

Coupin then channeled his adrenaline into a seven-yard touchdown catch from Anderson with 5:48 to go in the first quarter, knotting the score at seven apiece.

On the ensuing kickoff from Piganelli, Jet junior wide receiver Paul Okamura returned Piganelli's kick 70 yards for an Encinal touchdown and the lead, 14-7.

Facing a crucial fourth-and-two on Encinal's three-yard line with 1:41 to go in the first, Coupin punched two yards for the first down; but the Mats could not produce on the next set of downs.

In the first play of the second quarter, Jets sophomore running back John Trodder took the hand-off. Trodder fumbled the ball, which was picked up by Mats senior linebacker Egor Machin, and eventually thrown to senior wide receiver James King 13 yards for the touchdown, 14-13, but the Mats' still trailed by one.

The visitors scored one more time in the first half with 4:24 left when senior running back Kevin Paulsen fumbled the ball, but a heads-up Piganelli threw himself onto the ball in the end zone for the 20-14 lead for Miramonte.

With 26 seconds left in the first half, Encinal's fourth down conversion fell short, which turned out to be a major momentum swing towards Miramonte, and halftime came with Miramonte up 20-14.

Just 34 seconds into the third quarter, Anderson turned a quarterback keeper into a 54-yard touchdown run for the Mats.

With 2:52 on the clock, Encinal junior running back Jonathan Allen scored on a 41-yard run, and Encinal pulled within six.

Just 50 seconds into the fourth quarter, Jets sophomore running back Andrew Ve'e ran seven yards into the end zone, and the point after gave Encinal its first lead since early in the second quarter.

About three minutes later, with 8:54 left in the game, Ve'e took it in again, this time from 28 yards out to give the Jets some breathing room, 34-26.

Only a minute later, as 7:21 showed on the clock, Encinal senior linebacker Juan Perez picked up a Miramonte fumble and returned it down the sideline into the end zone for a comfortable 41-26 lead. Each team would score once more, but for the Matadors, it was not enough to keep Encinal from continuing their dominance as the Jets held off Miramonte, 48-26.

Although disappointed, Matador head coach John Wade was also proud of how his team had played the entire season. "I don't think anyone would've thought that we'd be playing tonight...we were a young team before the season and we've got a lot of football left in us," said Wade.

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Holiday singers at the Hospice Tree Lighting, December 5th. Co-sponsored by The Orinda Chamber of Commerce

Photo Ohlen Alexander

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