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Wednesday, January 20, 2010

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Campolindo's Adam Mancebo (#14) makes a nice reverse lay-up during the win against the Mats on Tuesday, January 12.



The hero of the night, Liza Kats (#10) of Miramonte, pushes her way to the basket giving Miramonte the game winning lay-up as they beat rival Campolindo 83-81.



Spencer McDonald (#2) of Miramonte stretches out for a rebound along with Campolindo's Garrett Franklin (#45). Photos Jordan Fong

Boys: Campolindo Defeats Miramonte

read story on page 21

Girls: Miramonte Defeats Campolindo in Third Overtime

DFAL competition heats up

By Conrad Basset

At the beginning of the year for the Diablo Foothill Athletic League girls' basketball season it was predicted that any of five outstanding teams could win the league. After the first two weeks of the regular sea-

son, it is proving to be just that.

The three Lamorinda teams came into the DFAL season with a combined record of 29-8 and, coupled with Dublin (11-2) and Dougherty Valley (11-1), the

stage was set for each game between these teams to be a battle.

Campolindo blasted Las Lomas 91-32 in their opener before falling to Dublin 65-41 on the road.

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F.A.I.R. Proposes to Dissolve MOFD and Contract with ConFire

By Andrea A. Firth

Almost 150 people packed the Orinda Library Auditorium at the January 5th Orinda City Council meeting to hear a presentation by the citizen group Fire and Infrastructure Renewal (FAIR) that proposes to dissolve the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) and contract with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (ConFire) and American Medical Response (AMR) for the City's fire and emergency medical services. The contractual arrangement would save \$65 million over the next 12 years that could be reallocated to fund Orinda's infrastructure needs, according to FAIR.

Representatives from all three agencies in the fire/emergency service triangle [Orinda-Moraga-MOFD] were on hand to hear the hour-long presentation by FAIR lead-

ers Al Resnick and Art Haigh. These attendees included the five Board of Directors of the MOFD, Fire Chief Randy Bradley along with several uniformed firefighters; and Moraga's Mayor Ken Chew, Councilmember Mike Metcalf, and Town Manager Mike Segrest.

"We are here to propose a better model for the delivery of fire and EMS. It's better because it costs less, leaving funds to address other infrastructure needs," stated Resnick, a 33-year resident of Orinda. "We also need to address the cost inequity between Orinda and Moraga. The money saved will be used to improve the safety of the city," he stated, adding that FAIR members want the MOFD tax reallocation investigated before the City proposes any new taxes. ...continued on page 6

AUHSD Faces \$4 Million in Education Cuts and Teacher Layoffs

By Andrea A. Firth

"It's just a bleak picture," stated Chris Learned, Associate Superintendent of the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) in the budget update presented to the Governing Board on January 13th. Based on the Governor's proposed budget, AUHSD will receive \$ 4 million less in revenue from the State in the next school year (2010-2011). This revenue loss, which has ballooned upward from the \$2.6 million deficit that the District had previously projected, could translate to laying off as many as 50 teachers and other staff.

Noting that notification for dismissal of teaching staff must be done by March 15th, AUHSD Superintendent John Stockton reviewed a draft list of staff cuts which would result in increased core class sizes, reduced elective choices and advanced placement classes, a skeleton counseling staff, and one librarian for the four traditional high schools. The District is also considering the closure of Del Oro High School, an alternative education program located in Walnut Creek.

... continued on page 20

Botanical Art Discovery



By Sophie Braccini

Sometimes the stars align and things just happen the way they were meant to be. Catherine Waters, a botanical painter from Orinda, was looking for a venue at which the Northern California Society of Botanical Artists could hold an exhibition. At the same time Paul Licht, Director of the UC Berkeley Botanical Garden, was looking for a way to bring botanical art to the Garden.

...read on page 13

Crab Catch!



By Susie Iventosch

Many of you may recognize Bruno Bartolini, one of the many helpful faces behind the seafood counter at Diablo Foods in Lafayette. Though semi-retired, Bartolini is just as often at work, helping customers and teaching them the ins and outs of the seafood industry. In the business for 40 years, he...

read on page 11

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Civic News

Lafayette

Public Meetings

NEW Meeting Locations
Lafayette Library and Learning Center, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd
City Council: Community Hall
Planning Commission: Community Hall
Design Review: Arts & Science Discovery Center

City Council Monday, January 25, 7:00 pm
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Planning Commission Monday, February 1, 7:00 pm
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Design Review Monday, January 25, 7:00 pm
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center in the Arts & Science Discovery Center at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Circulation Commission Monday, February 1, 7:00 pm
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center in the Arts & Science Discovery Center at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

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

• Police Report •



Excessive Celebration, 1/1/10
 At 1:32 a.m., Lafayette Police stopped the subject's car on Mt. Diablo Boulevard at Dolores for failure to maintain lanes. The Acalanes student was taken to the Lafayette Police Department for breath analysis on suspicion of Driving Under the Influence. The teen was later released to the custody of her mother. Talk about starting the New Year off on the wrong foot...

Suburban Vandalism, 1/2/10
 A Glenside Drive resident called police to report that his Suburban had been severely vandalized in his driveway. The front window had been smashed and all four tires were slashed. We can only assume that such a moronic vandal completely dominates the Whack-a-Mole game at Chuck E. Cheese. There are no suspects, witnesses or leads.

Penny Thief, 1/4/10
 The subject entered the Oasis Café on Mt. Diablo Boulevard and asked the unknowing clerk for a cup of water. When the clerk went to get the water, the subject grabbed the tip jar off the counter and sprinted out of the café. Witnesses saw him run all the way to an apartment right above the café. The offender was arrested and booked at the Martinez Detention Facility. The tip jar containing \$4.45 was recovered and returned to the Oasis Café.

Smokin' and Drinkin' on a Saturday Night, 1/9/10
 Lafayette Police pulled the subjects over for failing to stop for a stop sign. The two Campolindo students were found to be in possession of marijuana, alcohol and tobacco. Perhaps the poor driver was having a little trouble seeing through all the smoke, dude. The teens were cited and released to their parents. No more Beasties for them.

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Wrestling with the Downtown Parking Problem

By Cathy Tyson

Discussions continue on the Downtown Specific Plan; the Planning Commission took on Parking at last week's meeting. Talk focused on introducing and making recommendations toward a comprehensive parking strategy.

"Right now in Lafayette there are approximately 6,300 off-street parking spaces and 650 on-street spaces," said Niroop Srivatsa, Planning & Building Services Manager. In addition, she noted that four out of five employees in Lafayette drive to work alone. That was the major theme of the evening – that employee parking is a big problem. If more employees found alternate parking spots, then spaces in front of retail establishments would be available for customers.

"The Specific Plan has a comprehensive section about parking that identifies the target zone for a

parking facility. The Plan also identifies additional parking as funding priority. But the Specific Plan's intent, given its 20-year time frame, is to provide the policy framework for a future strategy," said Ann Merideth, Community Development Director.

City staff feel that in order to develop an effective parking strategy, a fair amount of data on existing parking is needed – everything from rates, to parking occupancy to number of employees who work downtown.

"Only after this data is collected and analyzed can the City begin to understand the real and perceived parking problems in the downtown core and develop effective ways to meet the parking needs of the businesses, employees, residents and patrons," noted a January 7, 2010, Staff Report.

... continued on next page

Rules for Protected Trees Slightly Amended

By Cathy Tyson



Photo Cathy Tyson

"I speak for the trees," is something Dr. Seuss's "The Lorax" might say, but in this case it's the language of the Lafayette Municipal Code. Chapter 6 – 17 "Tree Protection" was recently amended to clarify some minor changes that don't

substantially alter the purpose of the code. These regulations spell out what a "protected tree" is – a tree located on developed property that has a trunk diameter of twelve inches or more that is one of ten species, mostly oaks – see adjacent box for a complete listing. Adjustments also include replacement tree substitution ratios and in-lieu fees.

Many residents may be unaware that, "A category I or category II permit under sections 6-1706 or 6-1707 is required to remove or destroy a protected tree," according to the Municipal Code. Although, "When a hazardous or dangerous condition requires immediate action to protect life or property - the manager can grant an emergency tree removal permit."

In general, private property owners need a permit to remove a protected tree if it poses an imminent threat to private property. "We usually act on it on that day" said Michael Cass, Assistant Planner with the City of Lafayette. However there are some exceptions, when in doubt call the Planning Division at (925) 284-1976.

"Homeowners are responsible for maintaining their trees," said Public Works Serv-

ices Manager Ron Lefler. If there's a windy storm that causes a property owner's tree to fall across a road, obstructing traffic, "Call police dispatch at (925) 284-5010," said Lefler. "The police then call the foreman and someone from Public Works will respond." The homeowner is responsible for the cost, which could run from a few hundred dollars to much more if a crane is needed to remove a large tree.

However, if your tree or a large branch falls across a fence between you and your neighbor, damaging the fence or your neighbor's home – it's time to call your insurance carrier. "Depending on coverage, it could be covered by your homeowner's liability insurance," said Debbie Peters of State Farm Insurance.

Protected Trees in Lafayette

- Coast Live Oak
- Canyon Oak
- Blue Oak
- White Oak
- Black Oak
- Valley Oak
- Interior live Oak
- California Bay
- California Buckeye
- Madrone

The Lafayette City Council is soliciting applicants to fill the following volunteer vacancies:



Banner Advisory Committee develops a street pole banner program providing announcement and promotion of special events that occur in Lafayette. This committee meets two to three times per year as needed.

Contra Costa County Advisory Council on Aging (CCACA) advises the County Area Agency on Aging on all matters related to the development and administration of senior programs throughout the County. The Advisory Council meets on the third Wednesday of the month, at 9:30 AM, in Concord.

Creeks Committee encourages beautification of Lafayette's more than 16-miles of creeks and improves residents' awareness of creek maintenance and pollution prevention policies. The Creeks Committee meets the 1st Monday of the month at 7:00 pm in the City Offices located at 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 265.

Crime Prevention Commission studies safety issues in the City and works to educate the public on crime prevention. The Crime Prevention Commission meets the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm in the City Offices located at 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 265.

Design Review Commission advises the Planning Commission and City Council on matters relating to aesthetics and the physical appearance of Lafayette. The Commission typically meets the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month at 7:00 pm in the Arts & Sciences Discovery Center at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, 3491 Mt. Diablo Boulevard.

Senior Services Commission works to enhance the well-being of Lafayette's older adults by identifying their concerns and needs; providing information about resources; and promoting community programs and services that enable them to live meaningful lives. The Senior Services Commission meets on the 4th Thursday of the month at 3:00 pm in the Lafayette Senior Services Center at 500 St. Mary's Road (Alder Room).

Individuals interested in these volunteer positions may obtain an application on-line at www.ci.lafayette.ca.us or call the main office at 284-1968 and an application will be mailed to you. If you have questions related to these volunteer positions please call Joanne Robbins, City Clerk at 299-3210.

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Memorial Service for Ned Robinson



Ned Robinson Photo provided

Council Member Ned Robinson at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 23 at Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette.

Robinson served on the City Council for a total of 18 years, and was Mayor in 1972 and 1978. His first civic calling was working on getting Lafayette incorporated in the 1960's. Even after retiring from his career as an attorney, Robinson kept busy. He recently served as Vice-Chair of the Code Enforcement Appeals Board and attended meetings about the Downtown Strategic Plan.

"Ned's early guidance and easygoing manner put Lafayette on the right course following incorporation. He consistently and graciously gave his time and energy to make Lafayette a better community. When I followed Ned on the Council in 1985, after his second retirement, I always felt I had very big shoes to fill," said Mayor Don Tatzin.

He passed away at John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek on December 20; he was 82.
C. Tyson

Public Nuisance Home Continues to Deteriorate

By Cathy Tyson



The backyard of 3195 Condit Road, Lafayette. The windows were recently boarded up. Photos Cathy Tyson

What does it take to sell a foreclosed home, especially one that has been officially declared a nuisance? Although Bank of America, succeeding Countrywide, owns the property and several parties have expressed an interest in buying it, 3195 Condit Road, at the corner of Pleasant Hill Road, continues to deteriorate. The City of Lafayette will shortly be slapping an additional \$10,300 lien on the unoccupied place for abatement fees and fines - this is on top of a total of \$15,000 in liens placed on the property back in September, 2009. This paper originally reported on the property at that time; since then nothing has changed.

Lamorinda Code Enforcement Officer Greg Wixom just sent another round of certified letters as required by law to the mortgage holder for the cost of abatement - removal of dead bushes, repairing the fence and fines. "I can't explain it; I don't know what their rationale is. You think they would want to minimize their losses," he said. Mosquitoes have not been a problem yet, but that may change come springtime with a vacant dirty pool and standing water. "Vector Con-

trol has been notified, but with the cool weather mosquitoes are not an immediate concern," said Wixom. "Nobody seems to know anything about it," said next door neighbor Vivian Williams. "I can't find a human being to talk to at B of A. I'm exhausted - it's frustrating. This affects my property. I have called the police numerous times about teenagers partying inside." She's especially concerned that the teens hanging out inside the structure light candles that could possibly start a fire. With all of the rotting lumber and tall dry weeds the fire could easily spread to her adjacent home.



"Clearly Bank of America is not doing a thing with the property - not returning phone calls, not interested in working with the City," said Wixom. Rather ironic since there are a couple of developers and two contractors, according to Wixom, who have said they would like to buy the property if it ever becomes available.

Since 2007, the owner of record has been officially noticed to clean up the property. As of press time, the weeds are still there, the framing for an unfinished addition continues to rot and the partially drained pool hasn't seen chlorine in a very long time.

Wrestling with the Downtown Parking Problem

... continued from page 2

"The preparation of a comprehensive parking strategy is critical to the future success of the downtown."

Staff took a look at how other cities handle parking. Danville has cheaper parking a few blocks away from their downtown core. Redwood City allows for up to four hours at a meter.

Guest speaker Bob Powers, member of the Walnut Creek Downtown Parking Task Force and owner of a number of parking facilities in Walnut Creek, said enforcement and time limits are the only way to control parking. "People are lazy and cheap - that's the conclusion I've come to." Meaning people don't want to walk too far and they don't

want to pay too much.

Larry Blodgett, who joked he is keenly aware of the issue after receiving a \$25 parking ticket on the Library's opening day said, "The City should consider leasing vacant lots - a potential source of income for Lafayette. I'd like employee permit parking."

"Real or perceived - there is a parking problem in Lafayette. I encourage the City to buy or potentially lease property. We agree that street parking is essential," said Jay Lifson, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce.

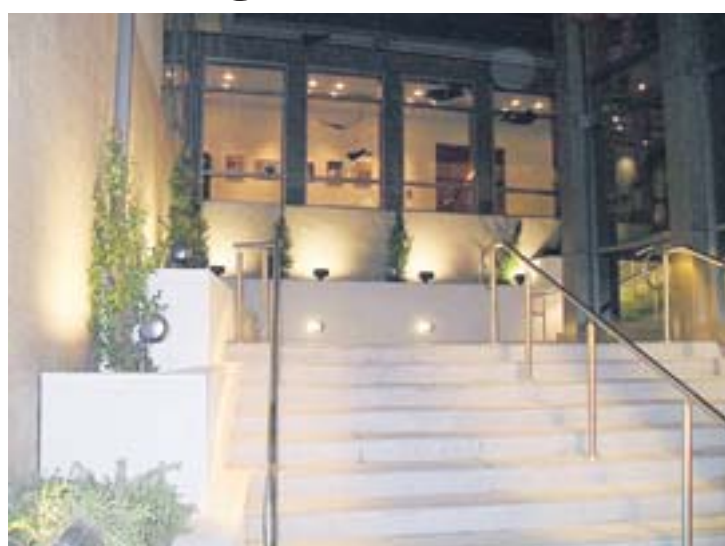
Erling Horn, former City Council member and an ex Parking Commissioner, suggested the city

re-establish a Parking Commission/Task Force.

The Planning Commissioners all agreed that the city obviously has a problem. "Whole Foods will put another burden on parking in the center of town," said Commissioner Karen Maggio, "we have to do this now." She also recommended that Lafayette should make efficient use of shared parking. Vice Chair Patricia Curtin-Tinley supported forming a Parking Commission or Task Force.

Chair Thomas Chastain summed up the current state of the Parking discussion, "I think it's irresponsible not to have some strategy toward a solution, but I'm not sure how to get there."

Finishing Touches on Library Landscape



The exterior of the new Lafayette Library and Learning Center was aglow with lighting and newly installing planting - a joy to evening patrons and City Council meeting attendees. With the exception of a handful of large trees in crates on Golden Gate Way waiting patiently to be installed, and ground cover for the amphitheater, the landscaping is almost complete.
C. Tyson

Photo Cathy Tyson

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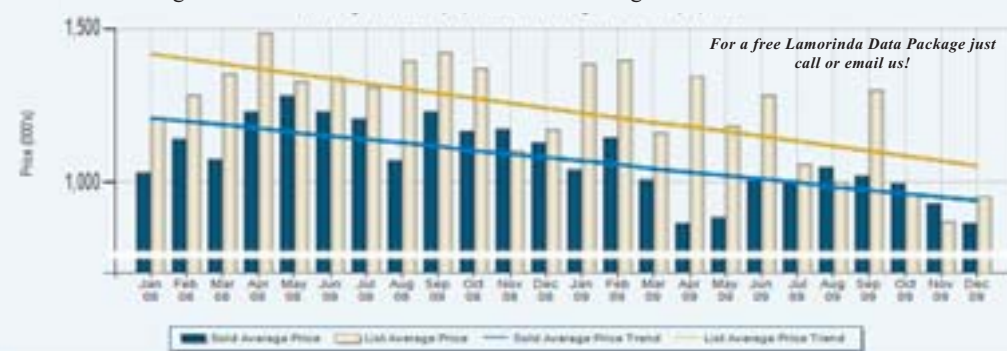
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Civic News

Moraga



Public Meetings	
Town Council	Wednesday, January 27, 7:30 pm Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo
Planning Commission	Tuesday, February 1, 7:30 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Design Review	Monday, January 25, 7:00 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Liaison	Friday, February 12, 8:00 am Fire Station, 1280 Moraga Way

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Moraga Specific Plan: The Democratic Process Takes Work

By Sophie Braccini

At the January 13th meeting of the Moraga Town Council the Moraga Center Specific Plan was reviewed yet again, or as Council Member Dave Trotter put it, "We've been massaging this for six months now."

However lengthy and detailed the process is, it seems that the text is always subject to modification, last minute additions, or, as was the case on January 13th, "mistakes" that delay final votes. A few motivated residents in attendance waited over three hours for the Council to work through its agenda and take up the Specific Plan. The discussion continued until midnight, and no final decision was made. That led some residents to ask whether the process still involved the public at the level it should.

"This is a public hearing and there is nobody here, you should not take a vote on this tonight," said Barbara Simpson. "How are the public's concerns addressed?" asked Jeffrey Fara, who said he had sent two letters and never received an answer. "This project got so much bigger than was discussed in the past; how did it get that way?" asked Connie Hayes. At midnight, it was clear that the doc-

ument was not yet ready and the final decision was postponed.

Of the five members of the public that were present to hear about a plan that could change the downtown significantly, only two stayed until the end of the meeting. It was easy to get lost in the debate over the use "will" or "could" in the CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) Findings regarding the implementation of a recreation facility in the Moraga Center. Members of the Council wondered how a recreation center/gym was again referenced as being mandatory rather than just a possibility, as the Council had previously agreed. "I explained at previous meetings that we first had to work on the political aspects of the documents and that the thousand pages that compose the plan and the EIR (Environmental Impact Report) would be reconciled at the end," explained Planning Director Lori Salamack, "only one discrepancy was found and it will be fixed."

The reappearance of the gym was not the only element that concerned consultant Dick Loewke, representing the main property owner, the Bruzzone family. "One of our major concerns is the re-

moval of a paragraph that allowed the reuse of the adopted Environmental Impact Report for projects that are compliant with the plan," said Loewke. Adding the obligation for each and every project to go through complete individual EIRs would add costs and threaten the likelihood of the plan to be implemented, according to Loewke. A compromise was found to change that language in the final document.

On the other hand, no satisfaction was given to the Bruzzones regarding an additional 50 feet of setback from the creek that, according to Loewke, "takes away some of the best flat land for affordable housing, and will transpose the buildings to steeper slopes where they will be more visible."

During the evening, the public received a good summary of the rational that took the plan where it is now, when Salamack responded to questions. "We could have planned a lower number of dwelling units and still satisfy our State housing mandate," she explained, "but there needs to be sufficient development to fuel the revitalization in the Moraga Center. The Council put a cap on the number of units, and required

that the traffic impact be less than the General Plan's. The Specific Plan needs to provide amenities, a quality of life and a sense of place. All these factors have taken us where we are." Salamack said that the Plan stems from needs identified by residents in the first year of planning, the first one being senior housing, that does not exist in Moraga and the impact of which is much less than single-family housing. Other needs are student housing (1000 undergrad students from Saint Mary's live off campus), and professional and work-force housing.

The Specific Plan sub-committee will meet again to work out acceptable language before the Council again takes up, and hopes to approve, the Plan on January 27th. "It won't be the end of the road, just the end of the beginning," said Salamack, referring to the implementation phase. In the meantime she is available by phone or email to respond to residents' questions. "When you are in a democracy it is work," she concluded, "People have to participate for it to work." She can be reached at 888-7043, or by email to lsalamack@moraga.ca.us.

Police Report



Toilet papered, 1/08/10 A family had been away from their Fernwood Drive residence for a few hours, when they returned unknown suspect(s) had "decorated" the front landscaping with toilet paper and tossed a life-size plaster statue to the ground. Stealthy TP-er's were not seen or heard by neighbors.

Profane poop on windshield, 12/31/09 Sometime between 10:30 p.m. on New Year's Eve and 2:00 p.m. on January 1st an unknown suspect wrote a profanity using feces across a Miramonte Drive resident's car windshield, while the vehicle was parked in her designated stall. Additional feces was smeared on the driver's door handle. That is just nasty.

Drunk in public, 12/31/09 At 3:15 in the afternoon a Moraga officer was dispatched to a possible D.U.I. - a car swerving all over the road on Moraga Road at Donald Drive. The driver was located on Ascot Drive as he was getting out of the vehicle. Good news he wasn't driving anymore, bad news he had a blood alcohol level of more than double the legal limit and he was on probation for a prior D.U.I. Because he wasn't driving when the cop caught him he was arrested for drunk in public and probation violation.

Found purse returned to owner, 1/03/10 A good citizen found a purse on the roadway near 7-11 and called police to report it. The purse had a small black wallet that contained California and Australian driver's licenses, gift cards, \$12.00 and some loose change. Everything was returned to the owner, who lives in Lafayette.

Council Orders Nuisance to be Addressed

By Sophie Braccini

Attorney Mark McLaughlin, representing the Alothman family that owns the house at 316 Calle La Montana in Moraga, appeared before the Moraga Town Council on January 13th to ward off abatement proceedings against the house that was declared a nuisance last October.

The house, located in the beautiful Campolindo neighborhood, has been unoccupied for years. It has degraded over time. Four years ago after a similar threat by the Town, the owners, who reside in Kuwait, had the roof replaced. They failed to

remove the car and furniture that still linger on the property and since then the house has been further vandalized.

According to Julie Herrington, whose family lives nearby, the house has become a place for teenagers to throw parties. The Town's staff is concerned over the mold and general squalor of the house, which could represent a health hazard.

McLaughlin explained to the Town that it was more reasonable to trust his clients to abate the condition themselves

within 30 days, saving the Town the expense. A list of seven actions that need to be taken was given to the owner. But the Council was ready to get tougher with an owner who, according to Council Member Mike Metcalf, has been taking the Council for a ride. "What can we do as a town to stop this abuse?" he asked.

For Council Member Trotter, the simple removal of filth and boarding of the house will not remedy the problem. He suggested that the house needs to be returned to a habit-

able state, to solve the situation permanently. The Council agreed, and a resolution was drafted that mandates the owner to comply with the 7 elements of the abatement list within 30 days, and hire a contractor that will restore the house to a selling or renting stage within six months. Monthly reviews by staff are required under the resolution.

Neighbors expressed satisfaction with the Council's firm stand. If the owner does not comply, the Town will take further action.

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Planning Commission Discusses Town Corp Yard

By Sophie Braccini



Potential new location for the Town's corp yard, 331 Rheem Blvd.

Photo Andy Scheck

Commissioner Bruce Whitley always does his homework before the Moraga Planning Commission meetings. On January 3rd, the Commission reviewed a conditional use permit for the Town to use the building at 331 Rheem Boulevard as a corporation yard (a place to store the vehicles and equipment used by the Public Works department, which are presently stored on the grounds of the Hacienda de las Flores). Town Manager Mike Segrest sought the Commission's approval before the Town engaged in the purchase of that building.

331 Rheem is close to the

Town's office building at 329 Rheem, and the move of the Corp Yard would improve the Hacienda's potential as a community center.

No objections were raised until it was Whitley's turn to speak. Whitley had concerns with the visual impact of the corporation yard. "This could become a real eye sore," he said, "it's going to be a junk yard, close to a scenic area, and across from a shopping center."

Whitley had drafted a modification to the conditional use permit which he distributed to his fellow commissioners. It required that the town install an automatic

gate or provide another type of visual screening.

Segrest responded that a maintenance yard is not a junkyard. "It will look like a parking lot," he said, "We could screen the construction material, or shield it some other place."

Commissioner Margaret Goglia proposed that the use permit be approved, while asking that the Design Review Board (DRB) add the screening requirement. The final resolution read that prior to occupancy of the property, the DRB shall approve a plan for visual screening from the scenic corridor.

MCC Receives Conditional Use Permit

By Sophie Braccini

On January 3rd the Moraga Planning Commission reviewed the conditional use permit presented by the Moraga Country Club (MCC) for a new clubhouse. The new building will rise in the same location as the existing clubhouse, and will have a

similar footprint and the same function.

The Planning Commission reviewed the documents presented by the Dahlin Group, the architect chosen for the project. The visuals showed a large, elegant looking building reminiscent

of a British countryside mansion. The overall height could reach 45 feet, which, according to Planning Director Lori Salamack, is not a problem in that location, which is away from the scenic corridor on a large expanse of land.

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City Council Tuesday, February 3, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission Tuesday, January 26, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Traffic Safety Advisory Committee Monday, January 25, 7:00 pm
Community Room, City Hall, 22 Orinda Way

Mayor's Community Liaison Meeting Monday, February 1, 8:15 am
Community Room, City Hall, 22 Orinda Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
City of Orinda: www.cityoforinda.org
Chamber of Commerce: www.orindachamber.org

• Police Report •



Stolen I.D., 1/07/10 An unknown suspect used the Wells Fargo Visa Check Card of an older Alta Vista resident to make over \$2,000 worth of charges. Most of the transactions were online – including a hotel reservation in Southern California. The gentleman had no idea how his card was obtained.

Indecent exposure, 1/13/10 A 30-year-old white male parked his Chevy Blazer in front of the Starbucks at Theater Square with his private parts exposed. Not only did he use his anatomy in a criminal manner, but burglary tools were found in his vehicle.

D.U.I., 1/07/10 A 78-year-old local man was stopped at the Shell station for driving an unsafe vehicle – his right front tire was flat. Due to his slurred speech and watery eyes, the officer gave him a blood alcohol test – which he flunked. He claimed he only had two glasses of wine, but apparently that was enough.

Frequent flyer locked in Safeway bathroom, 1/11/10 Orinda's favorite fifty-ish tippler locked herself in the Orinda Safeway bathroom. She eventually voluntarily exited the restroom and was placed under arrest for being drunk in public, again, and a probation violation, again.



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F.A.I.R. Proposes to Dissolve MOFD and Contract with ConFire

... continued from page 1



Art Haigh of F.A.I.R.

Photo by A. Firth

Who is FAIR? "FAIR cares deeply about this community and the safety of all our residents," stated Resnick of the group comprised of 80-plus residents from Orinda and Moraga. "We are not a group of disgruntled malcontents... We are active community volunteers," he

added. The organizers of FAIR are not new to the infrastructure challenge facing Orinda—a decaying road and water pipe system that will require \$120 million to bring up to optimal condition. Several FAIR members worked on the infrastructure bond Measures Q and E

that narrowly failed passing in 2006 and 2007. Subsequently, FAIR leaders Resnick, Haigh, and the team's number-crunching analyst Steve Cohn were all part of Orinda's Revenue Enhancement Task Force which first raised the idea of tapping the MOFD tax revenues for Orinda's roads.

What's the Issue? FAIR questioned the appropriateness of the MOFD's \$19 million budget, which they pointed out totals more than the budgets for the City of Orinda and Town of Moraga combined. "We do need to pay an appropriate amount for good [fire] service," noted Haigh, "but do we need to pay that much? Lafayette pays half of what we pay," he added.

How will it Work? The new arrangement will provide the same fire protection, staffing levels, and engine and ambulance response times, stated Haigh. Contracting for these services will yield lower overhead costs through the economies of scale associated with a larger regional fire district like ConFire, he explained. One key difference in FAIR's proposal is that the district's two full-time ambulances will be staffed with AMR paramedics, not firefighters. The MOFD currently has firefighters who are dual-certified as paramedics

covering the ambulances, a practice which FAIR contends is expensive and unnecessary. [See sidebar for FAIR proposal specifics.]

FAIR projects \$2.5 million in cost savings during the first year and this includes covering the existing MOFD pension bond obligation. FAIR says it based the fire service cost on conversations with ConFire staff who estimated the contract costs at \$2.5 million per station per year plus the cost of a fire chief. FAIR believes the savings will increase over time to generate an overall cost savings of \$77 million by 2022, of which \$65 million would be reallocated to Orinda and \$12 million to Moraga.

The Inequity Issue. Orinda receives the lion's share of the projected savings because Orinda pays more, according to the FAIR proposal. "Times and facts have changed," stated Haigh. While he acknowledged that property tax revenues have greatly outpaced inflation over the past several years due to the rapid rise in assessed values in both Orinda and Moraga, he stated, "There is an unfair balance between what Orinda and Moraga contribute, because Orinda's taxes have grown at a faster rate."

... continued on next page

MOFD Chief Bradley's Rebuttal

"I never thought I would be standing before the Orinda City Council regarding a proposal to dissolve the MOFD. I'm shocked," said MOFD Chief Randy Bradley when he stepped up to the podium to respond to the FAIR presentation. He then moved point by point through his rationale of why he does not believe that the dissolution of the MOFD and contracting with ConFire and AMR is the appropriate course of action.

"I have been through this before," said Bradley, explaining that he had been part of similar size fire department in the past; one in which he had recommended consolidating with a larger fire district as the best option. However, Bradley was emphatic that this was not the best option for MOFD.

"I believe that we have a very viable fire district. There are unique challenges, but I don't believe in anyway that you should risk the quality of your fire service to fix your roads," said Bradley.

"This District was created for a reason. You expect a high level of service, and that is what you are getting."

During his preliminary analysis of the FAIR proposal, Bradley found some flaws and reasons for concern. According to Bradley:

- The costs of contracting for fire service with ConFire are understated. FAIR's assumption that the cost of the ConFire contract would be \$2.5 mil per station annually. He noted that the MOFD operates at a lower per-engine-company cost than ConFire.
- ConFire is a quality department, but ConFire is a special district and does not have experience contracting services.
- ConFire faces difficult financial times ahead and may need to close the least busy stations (brown outs) and reduce companies from three to two persons which could negatively impact coverage in small communities like Orinda and Moraga.

• FAIR's assumption that contract rates with ConFire and AMR will rise by only 3.5% per year is highly questionable.

• Replacing MOFD's firefighter-paramedics with AMR paramedic-only staff on ambulances would reduce the number of firefighters initially arriving at the scene of a fire.

• Bradley indicated that he had spoken with AMR management last week, and that he did not think the AMR contract was feasible as outlined. "There is no money in a [geographically] peripheral district like ours. We don't run enough EMS calls to support two ambulances [from a private agency]."

• Regarding LAFCO, Bradley noted that the agency has the authority to dissolve districts and to assign fire tax dollars. Petitioning for dissolution runs the risk that LAFCO might alternatively elect to merge the MOFD into ConFire.

• "I believe that this [the MOFD] is the best model for these communities," Bradley concluded.

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RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

Orinda Council Supports Protecting Local Taxes

By Andrea A. Firth

At the last City Council meeting, Orinda City Council members voted unanimously to support a resolution to protect local revenues from tax grabs by the State. The resolution supports a measure to be placed on the November ballot that, if passed, would close tax loopholes and prevent the State from borrowing or otherwise redirecting local government taxes and transportation and public transit funds. A coalition led by the League of California Cities and others is working to collect one million signatures to guarantee the measure a spot on the November ballot.

“There has been a history of the State trying to grab local property tax monies and public safety and transit revenue,” states Eric Figueroa, Public Affairs Manager for the League of California Cities. Figueroa cites several examples of the State tapping into local resources during 2009 including the borrowing of \$2 billion in local tax funds, the redirecting of \$1.7 billion in redevelopment monies, and the shifting of \$710 million away from local transit authorities. Accessing the local revenues from the State gas tax (Proposition 42 funds) were also threatened, he adds.

The goal of the proposed measure is to prohibit the State

from taking, borrowing or redirecting local taxpayer funds dedicated to public safety, emergency response and other local services along with protecting dedicated transportation and public transit funds. “It will protect these local revenues constitutionally,” says Figueroa adding, “It provides assurance that local revenues stay local, providing certainty and protecting important essential services.” More information about the local taxpayer, public safety and transportation act of 2010 can be found at www.savelocalservices.com.

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Orinda Conducts Public Opinion Poll on New Taxes

By Andrea A. Firth

Orinda's City Council voted unanimously at its January 5th meeting to move forward with a public opinion telephone survey to gauge residents' satisfaction with City services and their willingness to support ballot measures for new taxes to fund road and storm drain improvements and City services and operations. The 19-question telephone survey, which will be conducted by the research firm FM3, will poll 400 residents during the 2nd and 3rd weeks of January.

With the City facing a shortfall for the 2010-2011 budget year, two of the survey questions are focused on whether residents would support a small tax, a ¼ cent sales tax or a \$53 parcel tax, to help fund City services. The amount of the projected budget deficit remains to be determined; a

\$53 parcel tax would raise an estimated \$370,000 annually.

The survey queries respondents about their likelihood to support new property tax measures to fund infrastructure improvements, including a \$20 million to \$50 million bond measure (an annual ad valorem tax based on assessed property value) or a parcel tax measure (\$300 per parcel a year). The survey also asks respondents about their support for increasing the local sales tax and establishing a real estate transfer tax or utility users taxes as funding options for infrastructure needs.

To place a measure on the ballot in the next regular election in June, the City must file with the County by March. One of the advantages of placing a ballot measure on the June ballot is the tie in

with the City budget cycle, which runs from July 1st to June 30th, noted Council member Steve Glazer. While the City Council has considered pursuing status as a Charter City, which would then enable it to propose a real estate transfer tax, it chose not to include survey questions regarding residents' interest in changing from a General Law to Charter City. A measure for Charter City status must be placed on the ballot in a November general election.

“Are you really ready to put something on the ballot in June?” questioned Orinda resident Alex Evans in his comments to the City Council during the special workshop held to discuss the poll. Too many issues, too little time, and too little money were the challenges

Evans cited to conducting the poll as devised. He suggested taking the goal of a June ballot measure out of the equation and proposed first conducting a poll to determine residents' priorities and views toward raising taxes before asking about specific ballot measures.

“We have to do this, because this is what we are here to do,” stated Vice Mayor Victoria Smith in her comments during the workshop. She outlined the survey's objectives as way to assess the community's view on how City government is doing and their willingness to support ballot measures for general and infrastructure taxes.

Results of the survey are tentatively scheduled for presentation to the City Council at their regularly scheduled meeting on February 2nd.

F.A.I.R. Proposes to Dissolve MOFD and Contract with ConFire

... continued from page 6

Later in the meeting, Orinda Council Member Steve Glazer countered the inequity argument citing the conclusion of a Tri-Agency Committee which found the cost-share of the MOFD, which is currently about a 65% to 35% split between Orinda and Moraga, is fair based on the scope of service and area of coverage each municipality receives.

ConFire Annexation Fear. FAIR reported that they had numerous conversations with commissioners from LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission) who refuted the idea that ConFire would like to annex the MOFD to take the property tax revenue for the County. However, Council Member Victoria Smith suggested caution with respect to LAFCO noting the serious financial deficits faced by ConFire and the deeper fire tax

revenue pockets of Orinda and Moraga.

Next Steps. At the conclusion of the FAIR presentation, Resnick strongly encouraged the City Council to create a subcommittee to confirm that fire service tax revenue can be transferred to the cities; to validate the accuracy of the FAIR presentation; and to work quickly to complete the review within sixty days. Staff was directed to coordinate a Tri-agency meeting with Moraga and the MOFD, and Mayor McCormick and Council Member Amy Worth were appointed to this subcommittee.

The MOFD has planned a question-and-answer session with FAIR representatives at its February 3rd meeting to be held at 1280 Moraga Way starting at 7:00 p.m.

FAIR Proposal

- Orinda and Moraga dissolve the MOFD, or Orinda detaches
- Contract with ConFire for fire service, keeping the same configuration: 5 fire stations, 3 firefighters and 1 paramedic per truck
- All employees absorbed by ConFire; one dedicated Assistant Fire Chief
- Contract with AMR for emergency service: staff the 2 existing ambulances with AMR paramedics
- Not in favor of annexation to ConFire or of forming own department

Average Property Tax for Fire/Emergency Service per Household*		
City/Town	% of total tax	\$ per household (average)
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*As presented by FAIR. % of total tax as established by Proposition 13.

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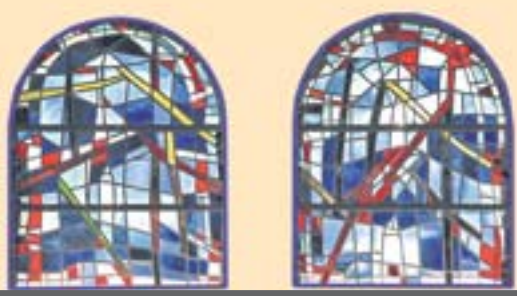


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Editor:
 I am so saddened by the state of the Rheem Shopping Center. I don't even think it warrants the title "Shopping Center" anymore since there are so few places to shop! I don't know if you have ever done a story on this Kimco Realty group, but I would sure love to see one. I don't really keep up-to-date with council meetings, etc., but I'm also wondering what has been tried, etc. Is there any way to get these people out of here? They seem heck-bent on emptying every store.
 Someone once suggested to me that Kimco makes more money reporting a loss for the empty stores -- can this be true? They must only also allow the thrift store drop off and art gallery to operate because it must give them some sort of write-off as well.
 That whole stretch now from what was our wonderful ice cream store - to the tanning store -- Blockbuster, etc.etc.etc. It's just AWFUL. Is there ANYTHING we can do? I have lived in Moraga for about 8 1/2 years and have seen an incredible number of stores try and fail.
 My question is, is there any way to rid ourselves of Kimco? What is the Town doing about this? Anything?
 I'm sure I'm not the only resident who is curious. This can't be doing anything for our town's appearance, property values, etc. It's a disgrace.
 Thanks.
 Jari Hazard
 Moraga

To the Editor:
 I find the article regarding the newly installed Mayor of Moraga Ken Chew to be vastly inconsistent from his public behavior. Of particular note is Mr. Chew's goal that he wants constituents to provide feedback regarding the public policy process.
 In February 2009, I spoke at public comment regarding the impending contract of the current Town Manager Michael Segrest. The main point of my comments, based upon my experience while on the Moraga School Board, was that the public was specifically excluded for the selection process. As your readers are probably aware, I ran and lost for a seat on the Moraga Town Council (MTC) in November 2008. However, given my involvement in various public policy issues affecting Moraga, I was totally unaware of that interviews were being conducted for this position. This was, in spite, of numerous conversations I had with then-interim Town Manager Jay Tashiro during the summer and fall of 2008. Nonetheless, I felt compelled to voice my opposition to the selection of Mr. Segrest to this position based on his professional experience as well as municipal finance considerations. However, given the posture and comments of the members of the MTC which included Mr. Chew, it was clear to me that any dissenting opinion was the last thing that the MTC cared to listen to. It was very apparent that public comment, with respect to this public policy issue was a mere formality, or should I say, nuisance required by the Brown Act.
 I strongly suggest that the current members of the MTC, including Mr. Chew, seek out and include diverse viewpoints and opinions in our community. I think that they will find that there are many in our community who feel their

voices are being ignored, and perhaps even muffled by the cacophony of voices from the cadre of seemingly blindly loyal MTC supporters. I kinda remember that old children's tale about the emperor new clothes. The MTC, including Mr. Chew, would be well served to remember that tale when they listen to those same voices who praised the emperor for his wonderful, yet non-existent, wardrobe.
 Dennis Wanken
 Moraga

Dear Lamorinda Weekly:
 I love your paper and the great job that your organization does it keeping us connected in our small communities.
 I live in Moraga at the mid section of Ascot Drive over-looking the Rheem Park shopping center. It is quite a nice view and I often have all my windows open to view the hills, cows, turkeys and deer that frequent the area. Recently a family moved into the next building and they let their dog roam between the two buildings, go down the hill a bit and take care of business....However it is right where my back viewing deck is. Right away if windows are open you can smell it, my company can smell it, my neighbors can smell it and we retreat inside and close the windows. It is such a bummer. We have several pet owners here and they have never allowed this. They take their animals for well deserved walks and pick up the poop.
 What can I do to get the quality back from my view and opening up the windows and hopefully before the seasons change and it gets hot again?
 I have checked for ordinances and I can only find the off leash ordinances at the parks and some other places around the Lamorinda area, but is there anything I can do to ask the neighbors to not let "sparky" poop in the hill below my home?
 Thank you,
 Ginger Misuraca
 Moraga
(Editor's note: We investigated, hoping to answer this reader's question. Contra Costa County has an ordinance that requires dog-owners to pick up after their pets. Ordinance 416-12-204 can be viewed at <http://www.contracosta.ca.gov/index.aspx?NID=1211>. The cognizant office is Animal Services, 925-335-8300.)

Dear Editor,
 It is hard enough to see every one of our local school districts in the area announce their significant budget deficits for the coming school year, but to have it as a result of a Governor's proposed budget, where he has claimed that he has "protected" education seems very deceptive!
 In fact, according to the California State PTA, the Governor's budget proposal will reduce funding to schools over the next two years by \$2.4 billion. California's per student funding is among the very lowest in the nation. Our schools need our support, both in volunteer time, and financially. Our students are our future, we all need to do what we can to support our local schools, especially in these tough economic times.
 Sarah Butler
 Orinda

Public Forum

Moraga Orinda Fire District
 As we enter a new decade in 2010, it is appropriate to both look ahead at what is planned for your Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) – and to also look back at the progress that has occurred over its first 13 years.
 Many of us well remember the driving factors surrounding the District's formation. Specifically: (1) we wanted to significantly enhance the seriously deficient emergency medical services that existed at that time in much of Orinda; (2) we needed to replace almost all of the old Orinda Fire District's apparatus and to seismically retrofit its fire stations; (3) we wanted to ensure that the outstanding paramedic engine company, paramedic ambulance, and fire services which already existed in Moraga, Canyon, and the portion of Orinda that was formerly served by the old Moraga Fire District would be sustained and (4) we wanted to secure local control over our fire and emergency medical services, which at that time were controlled by the County.
 I personally remember a day in 1988 when our pediatrician in Orinda told my wife to quickly drive one of our children to the hospital, as it was critical our baby receive immediate emergency treatment. Today, that advice would be irrational – as the safest and most expedient method for such an emergency medical transport would be an MOFD paramedic ambulance. However, that was definitely not the case in Orinda before MOFD was formed.
 Since its formation 13 years ago, MOFD has increased its paramedic ambulance service from the one paramedic staffed ambulance that formerly served the old Moraga Fire District to three paramedic ambulances – two of which are based at stations in Orinda. Canyon now has an 11,000 gallon water tank to help provide precious water in the event of a fire in that area. MOFD's Orinda stations have received new fire engines, a new water tender (tanker) and new paramedic ambulances. The Moraga stations have also received new fire engines and new paramedic ambulances. Two new, seismically safe fire stations have been built – one in each of Moraga and Orinda. Along with a seismically retrofitted Orinda fire station, we can ensure that firefighters and emergency medical staff will be able to deploy equipment in the event of a major earthquake. Firefighter training – and particularly emergency medical services training – has also been significantly expanded and improved.
 Of course, improving the District over the past 13 years has not come without pain, learning, and admittedly, a few mistakes along the way. With what we learned last year regarding an arguably arcane system that allows for retirement pay to exceed base salary in one's last year of service, we have taken steps to structure the new chief's contract in a way which will limit retirement benefits to be more consistent with the intent of the program. We have also worked with the firefighters union to produce a new contract that has no salary increases and also enables the parties to re-open discussions if new pension or medical coverage issues emerge.

MOFD has not been immune to the financial challenges that have impacted public entities as a result of the severe economic recession these last two years. The fire district's 2009-2010 budget reflects a deficit. Fortunately, MOFD has diligently set aside a rainy-day reserve which will help us through this year's shortfall. Furthermore, the District has a solid long-range financial forecast which conservatively indicates that we will shortly be back in the black. Other issues we are addressing include increases in our annual pension contribution as a result of the County Pension Plan suffering investment losses and ever-rising health care costs.
So what's in store for MOFD in the coming year?
 We truly want to encourage more community involvement and we want to make sure that communication from MOFD to you is clear, concise, and current. To accomplish this, we will be implementing the following:
 First, we are in the process of introducing an improved website. Our website – MOFD.org – will make it easier for you to see when Board meetings are scheduled, what is on the agenda for upcoming meetings, and also the minutes that detail what occurred at past meetings. The website will also provide easy access to information that will help you to understand the District's ongoing operations. That information will include: budgets, financial statements, long-range financial forecasts, employment contracts that cover all of the District's staff, and our strategic plan.
 Second, we are looking at larger sites for the board's regular meetings that will facilitate greater public participation.
 Third, we are seeking to enhance community participation in the review of the district's financial plans. The following agenda items have been tentatively scheduled and can be confirmed at MOFD.org.
 • Strategic Plan review – February 3rd
 • Long Range Financial Forecast update – March 3rd
 • 2010-11 Budget review – April 7th
 Finally, we recognize that our community is blessed with well educated and forward-looking citizens. We encourage everyone with any and all good ideas for improving MOFD's service, efficiency, and effectiveness to come forward and share them with us. After all, a 13 year-old doesn't have all of the answers. We as a Board will continue to do our absolute best to ensure continued outstanding fire and emergency medical service. We value your help and input in assuring our success in that endeavor.
 Sincerely,
 Frank Sperling
 Moraga
(Frank Sperling is the President of the Board of Directors, Moraga-Orinda Fire District)

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Wishing you and all of your loved ones a very Happy and Prosperous New Year



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

Total Clean Celebrates 25 Years of Spotlessness

By Sophie Braccini



Kim Winter with dog in her Rheem Boulevard office
Photo Sophie Braccini

When she was a student at Saint Mary's College, Kim Winter started cleaning homes. According to her, not only was it a way to help finance her education, it was also a relaxing occupation that took her mind off her classes. When she graduated, she decided to transform that activity into a real business and she developed "Total Clean" with a partner. The business has been growing in Lamorinda for 25 years. She now employs 19 people and is in charge of the cleanliness of hundreds of homes. "Having grown up here and contributing to the community in many ways is how I develop my business," says Winter. "We've been part of so many people's lives for so long now; it's the trust we build that keeps us successful."

According to Veronika Erickson, who helps with customer service and other tasks in the office, one of Winter's keys to

success is the way she takes care of the women who work with her. "Some of them have been with her for twenty years," says Erickson, "she gives them the flexibility they need to raise their families, she is interested in their lives and supports them as much as she can." Winter learned Spanish at Campolindo with Mrs. Lola Danielli (who still teaches there), and helps with such things as the translation of legal papers and communication with the teachers of her employees' children.

"Part of taking care of the ladies who work with us is to have them insured, bonded and protected if an accident happens," adds Winter. She also provides her employees with cleaning products that are environmentally friendly as she can. "This is good for the workers, it is good for our customers and good for the environment."

Suzanne Murphy of Moraga has

been using Total Clean for 13 years. "I love them," says Murphy, "I look forward to coming home after Total Clean has cleaned my house, it looks spotless, it smells wonderful, and I've never had a complaint."

Kris Holst of Orinda has been both Winter's customer and accountant for some 20 years. He attributes Winter's success to the fact that she used to clean herself and that she trains her staff in how to do things. "Kim is very detail oriented," he adds, "it shows in the quality of the cleaning, just as it simplifies our monthly financial reporting and payroll management."

According to Winter, her business has been steadily growing. Although 2009 was slower than usual, "I was able to keep all the employees and we've noticed a rise in demand in recent months," she adds. Winter admits that her pricing is at the top of the range for cleaning services but says,

"People would rather pay a little more and have the peace of mind to know that the people who will be working in their homes are insured, will offer consistent, quality service, and they never have to worry about the cleaning products." Most of her clients are located in Lamorinda; they have their homes of all sizes cleaned once a week or every other week, and Winter does not hold them to a contract.

Winter recently joined the Moraga Chamber of Commerce. The mother of two school-age children, sole proprietor of a business that used to be a partnership, she does not have a lot of extra time, "But it is important to give back to the community that supports you," she said.

Total Clean is located at 329 Rheem Boulevard, Suite B, in Moraga; call 376-1004, or go to www.totalclean.biz.

New Gym Opens in Downtown Lafayette

By Rosylyn Aragon Stenzel



Lamorinda CrossFit Owner Dave D'Angelo keeps watch while co-owner Anni Watson deadlifts 75 pounds. Photo Rosylyn Aragon Stenzel

Just in time for New Year's resolutions to get into shape, Lamorinda CrossFit is open for business with a new way of looking at fitness

that involves personal coaching, intense workouts and a sense of community. Located in downtown

Lafayette, Lamorinda CrossFit is not your typical gym packed with treadmills, ellipticals or other machines. Instead it is a clean, simple space with bars, weights and minimal equipment. Says co-owner Dave D'Angelo, "Your body is the machine!"

What is CrossFit? CrossFit is a back-to-basics approach to exercise. The exercises are an intensified version of everyday fundamental movements. It includes gymnastics, weightlifting and metabolic conditioning. Groups of four to five work out together with a certified CrossFit trainer.

D'Angelo, who also works as a custodian at Lafayette Elementary School, first learned about CrossFit training in October 2007 and since then has become a self-proclaimed CrossFit junkie. He became certified in CrossFit training in March 2008 and began to dream about opening up his own gym. Co-owner Anni Watson, who met D'Angelo while working at another gym, was looking for a job after completing college. ... continued on page 12

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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business briefs

Garlic Meets Restaurant Row

Roya's Garlic Garden, 3576 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette

283-3007, www.royasgarlicgardening.com

Roya's Garlic Garden opened a few weeks ago. Roya Azdanlou and her husband, Hamid, started their first gourmet restaurant in Sweden. While attending culinary school in Europe she learned to make everything from scratch, with dedication and care. "We were famous for our home cooked dishes," says Hamid. After many years of cooking different kinds of European dishes, Roya decided to continue with French cuisine. But after traveling the world and experiencing a variety of foods from all over the globe, she was inspired to create a menu that includes a diverse selection of tastes; something for everyone. They are now open for dinner from 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., featuring European cuisine, with happy hour from 4:00 to 6:00 offering wine or beer with garlic bread and olives for \$5. They are planning to open for lunch beginning in February. "I chose Lafayette because the people are extremely nice and open there," said Roya, "It is a green and lovely city."

Free Conference on Cloud Computing

On Friday, February 19th, at 9a.m., Darren Starr, CEO of StarrForce, a Lafayette-based technology consulting firm, will give a presentation to interested business owners on how to use information technology to better run their businesses while reducing information technology and computer costs. Cloud computing offers business owners the opportunity to access the computing services they need over the internet rather than having to setup computer systems in their offices. This presentation will review what cloud computing is, discuss examples including free solutions, why cloud computing is important for all businesses to know about, why it is safe and secure, and what the immediate benefits would be to businesses utilizing it. The conference will be held in the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Conference Room.

Andi Brown Joins Coldwell Banker

Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage announced today that Andi Brown has joined the company as a broker associate in its Orinda office. Prior to joining Cold-

well Banker Residential Brokerage, Brown worked at the Mark Company for five years as a sales associate. Her sales experience includes the St. Regis Residences in San Francisco and Mercer in downtown Walnut Creek. Brown earned her bachelor's degrees in both political science and communications from UCLA.

Mt Diablo Business Women Presents Charlotte Wood

On February 11th the association has invited Ms. Wood to present "Show Up in Your Business with Focus, Presence and Authority." Wood is the author of "Let Her Out!: Getting Back the Lost Pieces of YOU." Pre-registration by February 8 is a must. Please contact www.mtdiablobusinesswomen.org. Members \$37.00 Guests \$47.00

News from the Three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

- January 29: Business Issues / Governmental Affairs Meeting at 8:00 a.m. in the Chamber Conference Room.
- February Mixer on Wednesday, February 10th at Town Hall Theatre, 3535 School St. starting at 5:30 pm.

Moraga

- Chamber Meeting on Friday, January 29th starting at 7:30 a.m. at the Hacienda de las Flores. The January meeting will consist of a group discussion of goals for 2010 for the Moraga Chamber and the Moraga business community.

Orinda

- Wednesday, February 10th, Chamber Mayor's Luncheon at 12:00 noon, Orinda Community Center, 28 Orinda Way. Reservations on line on the Chamber's web site, www.OrindaChamber.org, \$15 per person.
- Mark your calendar for a new event in Orinda. On Friday, March 5th: "Live at the Orinda," the Chamber presents a champagne-splashed evening of live professional comedy in conjunction with Tommy T's Comedy House of Pleasanton, and the Lamorinda Film and Entertainment Foundation.

Lafayette Care Home

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Orinda
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JAN 29
WHEN IN ROME from Disney
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IT'S COMPLICATED
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JAN 29
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For exact dates & times, both theaters:
www.rheemtheatre.com

Please submit events:
calendar@lamorindaweekly.com

ART
The Lafayette Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of our new winter show "Treasures from the Heart," which focuses on distinctive gifts for the special people in your life. "Treasures from the Heart" will be on display through March 6th. The Gallery is open from 11:00 to 5:00, Tuesday through Saturday. You are warmly invited to a Champagne and Chocolate Reception on Friday, January 29th, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Lafayette Gallery, located at 50 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette, phone (925) 284-2788, www.lafayettegallery.net.

Doors open at 7:00 pm and the dance runs from 7:30 p.m. through 10:00 p.m. There will be a no-host bar open throughout the evening. Tickets \$10 per person available at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. Call 284-7404 for reservations www.lafayettechamber.org.

Moraga Art Gallery will present a new group show, "Three Continents," featuring local artists showing watercolor, acrylic and oil paintings, ceramics, photography, mixed media, jewelry and glass designs. Opening Reception, 3-5 p.m., January 23, and will run through March 14, 2010. The Gallery is featuring the work of two Moraga artists, Leslie Swartz and Mariann Mortensen. Swartz's subjects range from cats and elephants to garlic and orchids. Photographs often inspire Swartz's paintings and drawings, as do her extensive travels. Glass Artist/Metalsmith Mortensen's fused glass creations are lit up with copper accents and rich color, as seen in her jewelry, platters, coasters and functional dishware.

The Moraga Community Chorus needs sopranos, altos, tenors and basses for their spring program and year around. No audition is required—just the love of singing and the ability to carry a tune. The spring program includes pieces by Vivaldi ("Gloria"), Bart ("Oliver"), Verdi Opera choruses, Rodgers ("Carousel") and other show and popular tunes. Rehearsals are held Tuesday evenings from 7:30 until 9:30 at the Miramonte Gardens club house off of Moraga Road at 1 Miramonte Way in Moraga. The chorus performs in several venues (clubhouses, churches, retirement communities, schools, hospitals, shopping centers, hospice Christmas tree lighting, etc.). For more information call Tom Yarnane at (925) 376-6312 or better yet just come to a rehearsal and start singing with us.

The Orinda Arts Council announces the 7th Annual High School Visual Arts Competition featuring 2D, 3D and photographic art. Open to all high school students who live or attend school in Orinda, Lafayette or Moraga. Register online @ www.orindaartscouncil.org starting Feb. 1, 2010. Registration Deadline: Midnight, Thurs. Feb. 18. Artwork to be submitted to Orinda Library—May Room, Sun., Feb 28, 1:00-4:00 pm. Awards Reception, Wed., March 10, 4:30—6:00 pm. Exhibit runs March 5-30 at the Orinda Library Gallery. Questions? Contact cklevan@comcast.net.

Voices of Musica Sacra is holding auditions for all voice parts on Mondays through March 2, 2010, in conjunction with Monday rehearsals from 7:00-9:30 pm. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1924 Trinity Avenue, Walnut Creek (basses & tenors are especially needed). Call (925) 680-7089 to schedule an audition. June performances will be The Complete Choral Works of Samuel Barber. John Kendall Bailey, Music Director. See website for information and details, www.vmschorus.org.

MUSIC
Gold Coast Chamber Players announced this week the first of three concerts this season: Slavic Spirit, 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 31st at the Community Hall at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. The program begins with a string trio by Zoltan Kodaly, Intermezzo, continues with Franz Liszt's solo piano work Un Sospiro, Hungarian Rhapsody for cello and piano by Popper, and the popular Hungarian Dance #5 by Johannes Brahms for violin and piano. The highlight of the program will be the Sextet for Clarinet, French Horn, Piano and String Trio by Emo V. Dohnanyi. The Community Hall is located at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Join us for the other two programs: Bach-Bachianes on Sunday, April 25 at 2 p.m. and Fantasy-Phantasies on May 22 at 8 p.m.

THEATRE
Boys Day at Berkeley Ballet Theater, Sunday January 31, 2010 12 p.m.-5 p.m., Julia Morgan Center for the Arts (2640 College Ave.), Berkeley. Cost: FREE. For more information, call Ilona McHugh, Artistic Director (510)-843-4688 ext. 111 or email idance@berkeleyballet.org.

The Saint Mary's College Performing Arts Department will present a stage adaptation of the ever popular folk tale RIP VAN WINKLE by Washington Irving. This short tale is elaborated and adapted into a full hour of child-focused entertainment. Performances will take place in LeFevre Theatre at Saint Mary's College on Wednesday, January 27 at 7 p.m. and Thursday, January 28 at 4 p.m. All tickets are \$8. For reservations call (925) 631-4670 or email scahill@stmarys-ca.edu.

Town Hall Theatre presents Oscar Wilde's Victorian satire "The Importance of Being Earnest" — but with a twist. This production is set in the 1920s, when everything "modern" was the height of fashion and women were taking their proper, prominent status. There is no better play to show Oscar Wilde as the true reveler — and mocker — of all things modern. It's directed by Susanah Martin, who returns to Town Hall after her multi-Shellie Award-nominated production of Rabbit Hole. The show runs Feb. 25 — March 27. For tickets, contact the Town Hall Theatre Box Office at

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LITERATURE & LECTURES
Storytelling for Leaders: Join us for this daylong experiential workshop exploring storytelling as a vehicle for change. Stories are as old as humankind and are new each time we tell them. If we wish to preserve something, we must first learn to tell its story. Or, to change direction we must learn to change the stories. What are the stories you and others are telling? Saturday, January 23, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Hagerty Lounge, De La Salle Hall, Saint Mary's College of California, 1928 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga. Registration: <http://www.acteva.com/go/smcleader-shipcenter> or RSVP via return email to lag4@stmarys-ca.edu.

Not to be missed
2951 or visit the museum's website at www.wildlife-museum.org.

Parent Education Night: When things go "haywire" even with parent's best intentions. Wednesday, February 3, from 6:30 p.m. — 9:30 p.m., 66 St. Stephen's Drive, Orinda. Youth and young adult experts Dr. Francis Bartolomeo, Jack Kline and Karen Fitzhugh from CRC Health Group will talk in a panel format on helping our youth manage stress and issues that can result in unhealthy behavior. Free/No cost to attend. No reservations needed. Phone: 254-3770; email: office@ststephensorinda.org; website: www.ststephensorinda.org.

The stimulating evening 2010 lecture series, Dialogues, at the Contra Costa JCC in Walnut Creek will launch on Tuesday, January 26, 2010, with Rabbi Robinson, who will address the timely topic, Jews in the U.S. Military: It's Not Your Grandfather's Armed Forces. The 2010 line-up for Dialogues includes subjects ranging from jazz, aging in the 21st century, and Israeli cuisine to a Jewish journalist's prospective on covering Israel. Receptions round out each lecture. The second lecture will be held on Thursday, February 11 with Lillian Rubin, Ph.D., who will discuss "Does Age Count? The Truth About Aging in the 21st Century." To learn more about Dialogues and the different package options, or to register, visit www.ccjcc.org/dialogues or call 925.938.7800, ext. 256 The Contra Costa JCC is located at 2071 Tice Blvd. in Walnut Creek.

OTHER

The 2nd Annual "Heart of the Home" Kitchen Tour returns Wednesday, February 10, from 9:30-1:30. See six beautiful, remodeled kitchens. Freshly cooked crepes will be offered, tempting raffle items, craftsmen and designers will be in some homes. Very special cooking classes offered for sign-up. Enjoy lunch at Shelby's, Theater Square in Orinda, and take home cupcakes from Republic of Cake (show ticket for a donation). Tickets: \$25 at McDonnell Nursery, Orinda Books, Elaine's Nails (Orinda), Lazy K Gifts (Lafayette), Across the Way (Moraga), J. Hettinger (Danville) & Miramonte High School's webstore. To benefit MHS Grad Night '10. Tour hotline 212-4208.

Budd McKenzie will be speaking at the World Affairs Council East Bay Chapter on January 27 at the new Lafayette Library. Budd is the Founder of Trust in Education (TIE), a non-profit organization that provides education, economic development and health care in Afghanistan. TIE was founded in 2003 and today the organization consists of 30 teachers and 850 students, of which over 600 are girls. MacKenzie will provide unique insight into the Afghan-American relationship and will discuss his observations of the interactions and efforts made between the local Afghan population, nonprofit aid organizations, and the US military. Registration: 6:30 p.m., Program: 7:00 p.m. Council Members & Nonmembers: \$5; Students: Free. Location: Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette.

Green Rheem Film Night Series seek student interns (think credit!) and adult volunteers. Support the showing of an educational documentary related to the environment every 2nd Thursday evening of the month. Please contact Susan JunFish at junfish@gmail.com for more info on how just an hour of your time a month can help keep this going and support the Rheem Theater from closing.

Overuse Injuries in the Young Athlete and Diagnosis and Management of Sports Related Concussions: A lecture and discussion with Cindy Chang, MD. Wednesday, January 27, 2010 7:30- 9p.m. Miramonte High School Theatre, 750 Moraga Way, Orinda. Dr. Chang served as head team physician for Cal's 27 athletic teams from 1995-2008 and is recognized as one of the leading primary care sports medicine physicians in the country.

Free Tax Preparation for the 2010 tax season will again be offered by Tax Aide's AARP-sponsored program. The service is available starting February 2010 to low and moderate income taxpayers of any age but special attention will be given to seniors 60 plus. Please call (800) 510-2020 or (925) 335-8749 for Tax Aide locations in your community. To complete your tax return, Tax Aide will need you to bring to the appointment your: Social Security Card or ITIN letter for all individuals to be listed on the return; Copies of all W-2s; 1098s and 1099s; other income and deductions; your 2008 Tax Return; 2009 property tax documentation to claim property tax deduction.

"What's Next for Global Cinema and Music - The Rise of Bollywood and South Asian Identity" Classically trained tabla (north Indian drums) artist Robin Sukhadia presents a survey of the history of Bollywood cinema through film clips and live performance. Sukhadia's lecture will present Bollywood as a lens through which to understand India's growing influence on global politics, music and culture; with a special focus on the success of "Slumdog Millionaire" and its relevance to where Indian cinema and India is going. When: Wednesday, Jan. 27, at 7 p.m. Where: Soda Activity Center, Saint Mary's College, 1928 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga. Free and open to the public.

Widowed Persons Support will be offering a series of six Grief Support Meetings on Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. to noon. The series begins January 9 and ends February 13. These meetings will be held at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephens Drive, Orinda. No charge. These meetings are not church affiliated and are led by trained widowed facilitators. These meetings are primarily for recently widowed persons but anyone who feels the need of additional support is welcome. You need not attend all 6, but just come when you can.

The Friends of the Lafayette Library present Susan Wels, the author of the new biography of Amelia Earhart for the next Sweet Thursday, January 28, 7:30 p.m. at the new Lafayette Library and Learning Center, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd in Lafayette. Earhart was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean and the first person to fly solo across the Pacific. But Amelia Earhart was also a photog-

CLUBS
Sea Scouts is a non-profit youth maritime organization. Teens learn how to operate and maintain large ships as well as sailboats, kayaks, and canoes. They also learn navigation, knots, compass, radio communications, weather, first aid, water safety and leadership skills. The Sea Witch crew meets year round, Tuesdays 6:30pm - 8:30pm at the Sea Scout building, 225 N. Court St. Waterfront Park, Martinez, and Saturdays 9:00-3:00p.m. on the ship at the Martinez marina. Only \$15/yr to join. For more information or to participate in an event, contact Communications Officer Mr. Rolf Lindenhamm at lindenhamm@sbcglobal.net (925) 917-0573. Our upcoming event is Engineering Day on Jan 30th from 8:30 am to 4:30pm. Reservations required. We will be disassembling gas and diesel engines and learning how they operate from experts.

Its Girl Scout Cookie Time! The Girl Scouts annual Cookie Sale is going on. From January 15 through January 31, local Girl Scout troops will be out and about in your neighborhood taking pre-orders, with deliveries starting February 22. Don't know any Girl Scouts? No problem. Just call us to get in touch with a troop in your area. 1-800-447-4475 ext. 190. Then, from March 5 through March 21, Girl Scouts will be selling those delicious cookies at various locations through-

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Crab Catch!

By Susie Iventosch



Bruno Bartolini, seafood expert at Diablo Foods in Lafayette

Photo Susie Iventosch

Many of you may recognize Bruno Bartolini, one of the many helpful faces behind the seafood counter at Diablo Foods in Lafayette. Though semi-retired, Bartolini is just as often at work, helping customers and teaching them the ins and outs of the seafood industry. In the business for 40 years, he has both wholesale and retail experience under his belt and he knows a lot about seafood, especially crab.

"Seafood is my specialty," he says. "For any question you have, I have the answer!"

According to Bartolini, there are several different types of crab, such as the blue crab, which doesn't have much meat and is used more for its flavor in dishes like gumbo. There is also soft-shell

crab, where the entire crab – shell and all – is eaten. Then there is the Alaskan king crab, which is very meaty, but is always frozen. He prefers the Dungeness crab, named after a town in Washington State, which has sweeter meat and is always available fresh during the season.

"The crab from Eureka and north looks very good this year," Bartolini said. "They are coming in at 2.25 to 2.5 pounds, whereas the local waters are producing crabs of smaller size, about 1.5 to 1.75 pounds."

And despite a sluggish economy, crab is still on the menu in many homes.

"We sold between 7,000 and 8,000 pounds of crab for Christmas this year, alone," Bartolini said.

"We had a crew of 14 people for two days prior to Christmas just to clean and crack the crab for the orders we had!"

He says it's like this every year at the holidays, but, crab is very popular all the way through June. Customers can always call ahead for orders, to save time.

Dungeness crab season opens in November or December and typically runs through June.

"Exclusive Fresh out of Half Moon Bay specially selects crab for us," Bartolini noted. "They bring in about 1,000 pounds per haul and keep them live in tanks onboard the ship. Then they cook the crab back at the plant for about 20 minutes in boiling water with rock salt. Immediately, they immerse them in an ice bath."

Crab Feeds



Photo Susie Iventosch

Craving crab but don't feel like fixing it yourself? Over the next few weeks you can have your crab and contribute to a cause as well. Many of our local philanthropic organizations will be hosting their annual Crab Feeds; just the ticket for a crackin' good time!

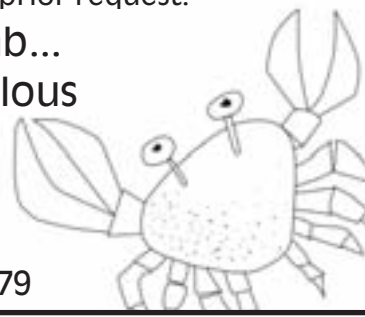
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Bruno's Cracked Crab

Ingredients

- 1 large whole fresh crab, cracked and cleaned
- Marinade:
- ¼ cup really good olive oil
- Juice of one lemon
- 1 tablespoon fresh chopped garlic
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped Italian parsley
- ¼ cup good white wine

Directions

Rinse and dry crab and place in a large bowl. Whisk the marinade ingredients together. Pour marinade over crab and toss well. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for one hour, or longer. Toss again. Eat with lots of bread and butter!



If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email suziven@gmail.com or call our office at 925-377-0977

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.

Go to: www.lamorindaweekly.com

Gigi's Crab Dip

This recipe comes from my grandmother's recipe file. She loved to cook and entertain, so it's always fun to read the notes marked on the recipe cards. Grandmothers' recipe boxes should be considered national treasures, as they not only offer a folkloric anthropology of the times, but also serve as a living history of dining and entertaining trends. This recipe makes a wonderful base for crab cakes, too. All you need to do is add an egg and some bread crumbs, along with diced celery and parsley, and voila, you've got crab cake batter.



Gigi's Crab Dip

Photo Susie Iventosch

Ingredients

- ½ pound fresh crab meat
- ¼ cup chopped water chestnuts
- 2 tablespoons finely sliced green onions (sautéed or raw)
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons Louisiana Hot Sauce
- Juice of half lemon
- ½ teaspoon New Mexico Chili powder
- ½ teaspoon sea salt (if needed)

Directions

Mix all ingredients and serve cold with crackers, or spread on baguette slices and broil for a hot hors d'oeuvres. My grandmother used to serve this dip in mini-ice cream cones for cocktail parties. These are available at Whole Foods in the ice cream aisle. Be sure to use the regular, flat-bottomed cones, not the sugar cones!

Crab Feed & Dance

Saturday, February 6, 6:00 – 11:00 p.m.
 Bring your appetites & dancing shoes.
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New Gym Opens in Downtown Lafayette

... continued from page 9

After seeing results in CrossFit training, Watson too became hooked and with her encouragement, they opened Lamorinda CrossFit together.

What makes Lamorinda CrossFit's founding unique is they opened the gym in honor of Watson's late brother, Sgt. Gabriel Guzman. Twenty-five-year old Guzman was serving in the Army with the 82nd Airborne when he was killed in Afghanistan on March 8, 2008. Watson found out the news while in labor before her daughter was born. Watson and her brother were very close, and she knew since he was a fitness enthusiast, he would have loved CrossFit. So in his honor, she used the money he left her to finance Lamorinda CrossFit and open it with D'Angelo, a Navy Gulf War veteran.

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Lamorinda Home Sales continued

LAFAYETTE	Last reported: 11
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$605,500
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,595,000
MORAGA	Last reported: 6
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$155,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,100,000
ORINDA	Last reported: 8
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$705,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,625,000

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**
- 881 Avalon Court, \$1,255,000, 3 Bdrms, 2085 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 12-24-09
 - 3025 Bradbury Drive, \$975,000, 4 Bdrms, 2076 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 12-18-09
 - 3363 Carlyle Terrace, \$840,000, 3 Bdrms, 1791 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 12-15-09
 - 11 Dianne Court, \$1,075,000, 4 Bdrms, 2804 SqFt, 1976 YrBlt, 12-23-09
 - 870 Las Trampas Road, \$605,500, 2 Bdrms, 2166 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 12-23-09
 - 3487 Monroe Avenue, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 1551 SqFt, 1992 YrBlt, 12-18-09
 - 3407 Moraga Boulevard, \$1,000,000, 3 Bdrms, 2111 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 12-15-09
 - 567 Silverado Drive, \$900,000, 4 Bdrms, 1851 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 12-17-09
 - 3976 South Peardale Drive, \$1,035,000, 5 Bdrms, 2128 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 12-11-09
 - 4020 Tilden Lane, \$1,595,000, 3 Bdrms, 2386 SqFt, 2008 YrBlt, 12-17-09
 - 1041 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$1,325,000, 3 Bdrms, 1450 SqFt, 1910 YrBlt, 12-16-09
- MORAGA**
- 118 East Ascot Court, \$155,000, 1 Bdrms, 858 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 12-14-09
 - 322 Birchwood Drive, \$875,000, 3 Bdrms, 2193 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 12-18-09
 - 168 Miramonte Drive, \$349,000, 2 Bdrms, 1134 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 12-16-09
 - 294 Paseo Bernal, \$609,000, 3 Bdrms, 2018 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 12-18-09
 - 203 Tharp Drive, \$965,000, 5 Bdrms, 2452 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 12-16-09
 - 100 Walford Drive, \$1,100,000, 5 Bdrms, 2340 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 12-17-09
- ORINDA**
- 14 Beaconsfield Court, \$720,000, 4 Bdrms, 2073 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 12-16-09
 - 48 Camino Encinas, \$800,000, 3 Bdrms, 1745 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 12-22-09
 - 2 Donald Drive, \$1,625,000, 1 Bdrms, 832 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 12-15-09
 - 10 Edgewood Court, \$810,000, 4 Bdrms, 2231 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 12-17-09
 - 3 Estabueno Drive, \$767,500, 3 Bdrms, 1798 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 12-11-09
 - 70 La Cuesta Road, \$705,000, 4 Bdrms, 1352 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 12-15-09
 - 116 Via Floreado, \$1,225,000, 3 Bdrms, 2731 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 12-15-09
 - 26 Via Moraga, \$1,275,000, 4 Bdrms, 1776 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 12-17-09

Lamorinda Foreclosures continued

- LAFAYETTE**
- Happy Hollow Court, Rww Properties, 12-02-09, \$589,300, 2081 sf, 4 bd
 - Highland Court, JP Morgan, 12-08-09, \$680,000, 2091 sf, 4 bd
 - Los Arabis Drive, JP Morgan, 12-09-09, \$1,351,689, 2634 sf, 4 bd
- MORAGA**
- Ascot Drive #135, Ready Realty Investors Fund, 10-29-09, \$125,000, 713 sf, 1 bd

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Life in LAMORINDA • Botanical Art Discovery

By Sophie Braccini



Catherine Watters at work in her Orinda studio Photos Sophie Braccini

Sometimes the stars align and things just happen the way they were meant to be. Catherine Watters, a botanical painter from Orinda, was looking for a venue at which the Northern California Society of Botanical Artists could hold an exhibition. At the same time Paul Licht, Director of the UC Berkeley Botanical Garden, was looking for a way to bring botanical art to the Garden.

When Vanessa Crews, the Garden's Director of Development, met Watters she connected the two. "Dr. Licht asked me how botanical art might fit in and I suggested an exhibit, a lecture and a class, and they said yes to all," said Watters. *Plants Illustrated: An Exhibition of Botanical Art*, curated by Watters, opened at the Garden on January

16th. Two of the 36 artists whose work is displayed are from Lamorinda; Watters and Lee McCaffree.

Watters was born and raised in Paris, France, and moved to the United States as a teenager. She graduated from UC Davis in French Literature and Arts. The beginning of her adult life took her from teaching to traveling, before getting married and having children. "Then one day I woke up and felt that if I didn't go back to art now, I might miss it for the rest of my life," Watters remembers. She looked for classes and stumbled by chance on a Botanical Art class. "The minute I entered that class I knew that this was what I would be doing for the rest of my life," says the painter. Watters continues to grow in her chosen art form, dedi-

ating an increasing number of hours to teaching it.

"I can teach botanical painting to anyone," she says, "even if they haven't had any formal training." Watters says that it takes one to two years for her students to start mastering the techniques, if they apply themselves consistently. "I can tell right away if someone has a gift and will become excellent at it," she says, "but all can become very good."

Botanical painting is the art of reproducing exactly, and to scale, plants, flowers, or pods that come from nature. "You always work with live material," says the artist, "ideally, you will achieve the first drawing in one sitting, take pictures of your plant before it wilts, and work with similar live plants to finish the work." A painting can take from 50 to 200 hours of works and is made with only natural elements: natural pigments for the watercolor, ceramic bowls to hold the paint, sable brushes, and cotton or calf skin canvas (vellum).

"When the masters of the 18th century developed this art, it was for scientific purposes," explains Watters, "but they attracted art loving patrons, too. Such was Pierre-Joseph Redouté, who was beloved by Marie Antoinette and the Empress Joséphine (Napoleon's first wife, who had a passion for roses).

... continued on page 18

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The UC Botanical Garden is a non-profit research garden and museum for the University of California at Berkeley, having a notably diverse plant collection including many rare and endangered plants. Established in 1890, the Garden, which is open to the public year round, has over 13,000 different kinds of plants from around the world, cultivated by region in naturalistic landscapes over its 34 acres. The garden conducts 100 programs every year with topics including native plant dyes, orchid division, bird walks and much more. The garden protects rare plants and conducts extensive research involving plants.

A Watters painting that can be seen in the Berkeley exhibition

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Cuckoo's Louise Fletcher Gets Star on Orinda Theater Walk of Fame



Photo Ohlen Alexander

Actress Louise Fletcher (seated left), who won an Oscar for her portrayal of the steely-eyed Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, looks on as her honorary star for the Orinda Theater Walk of Fame is unveiled. Fletcher along with cast members Mimi Sarkisian (center), who played

Nurse Pilbow, and Michael Berryman (right), who played mental ward patient Ellis, and producer/director Saul Zaentz (not shown) attended the California Independent Film Festival's screening of the 1975 film classic at the Orinda Theater on Saturday, January 16th. A. Firth

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Life in LAMORINDA

Lafayette Book Store Supports Budding Entrepreneur

By Sophie Braccini

Dave Simpson enjoys throwing parties for the community. Locals and book lovers come to his Lafayette Book Store, sip wine and browse through the offering of new and used books; there is always something or someone special at these events. On January 7th, the party was for Asma Abu-Taleb, a Jordanian woman who hopes to become a bookseller, and who just concluded a "Vocation Vacation" with Simpson and his team to figure out if owning a bookstore is indeed the right endeavor to pursue.

"Vocation Vacation is a national company that connects

people with the job of their dreams," says Susan Chritton, a career coach in Lafayette who consults with the company, "For a fee, individuals interested in a career spend two days shadowing a mentor in the profession they are interested in. The vacation is preceded and followed by a coaching session to assess their needs." Right now the company offers more than 175 different 'vacations' with mentors in such professions as cheese maker, green home builder and schooner captain; Simpson is their bookstore mentor.

"When I first heard about

Vocation Vacation from Susan I immediately agreed to be their bookstore partner," said Simpson, "teaching and transmitting my passion is one of the things I love to do." Simpson mentored a mother/daughter a few months ago, but they ended up giving up on the dream. "They understood that the job was just as glamorous as they had expected, but on the other hand I gave them a reality check, and the complexity scared them off," said Simpson.

Abu-Taleb was not discouraged by Simpson's warnings. The resident of Amman has friends in United States who told her about

the program. "I went online and started browsing all the different possibilities they have for a 'Vocation Vacation,'" she remembers, "when I saw the bookstore I immediately contacted them." She took the opportunity of a planned vacation in the United States to meet with Simpson and his team. "I learned so much in a short period of time," said Abu-Taleb at the party, "we worked with Dave on the business plan, the financing and the logistics. Now I'll have to localize it." She now has additional ideas to consider, such as a used book section, an internet store, and the

facilitation of book clubs.

The experience has been interesting for Simpson as well. "I had spent hours before, for the mother/daughter team, to establish a curriculum," said Simpson, "I reviewed it for Asma with an international perspective that was different than my business-as-usual practice." Simpson then spent two days focusing on Asma and her business project. She shadowed him around the bookstore and, together with the team, they brainstormed her specific business plan. "In the process, I thought of new international angles for my own business,"

said Simpson.

For Abu-Taleb the next step was to meet with the Vocation Vacation coach to talk about implementation steps. She seemed pretty confident about her chances to start a business in Jordan. "There is only one major traditional bookstore in Amman," she says, "the way Dave manages his business is different and I think I have an opportunity to seize." She is back there now, armed with Simpson's experience. "I have promised to continue to consult with her pro bono," adds Simpson, "I'd like to see her succeed."

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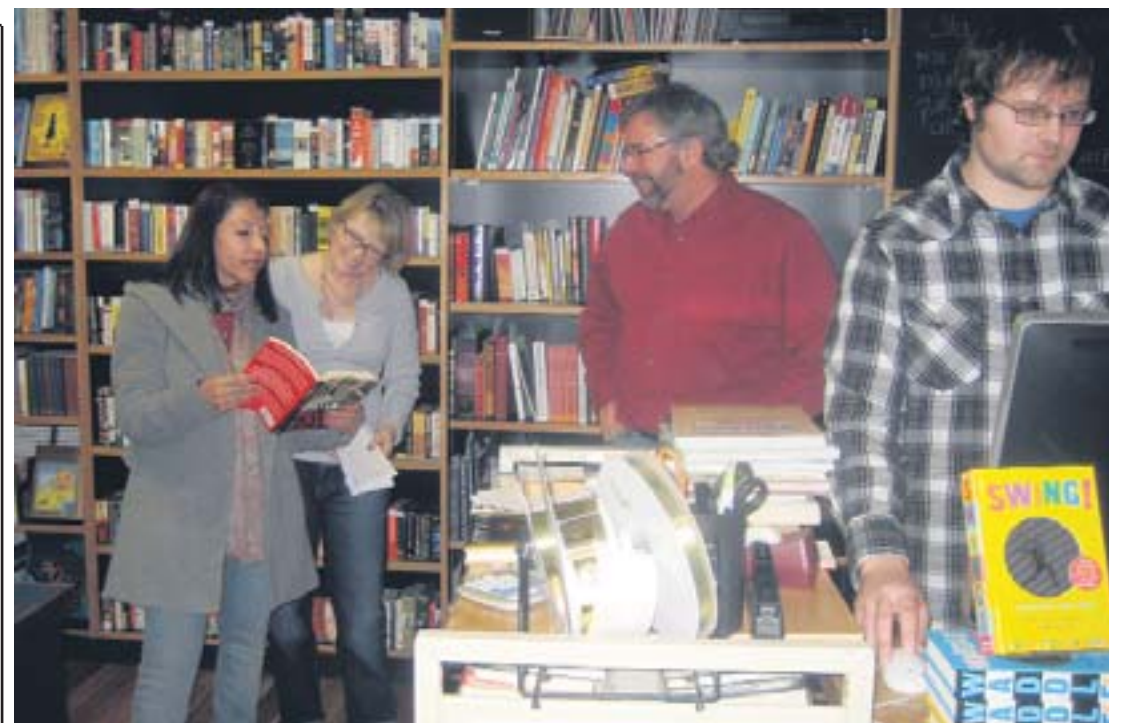
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(L-R) Asma Abu-Taleb, Linda Grana, Dave Simpson and Aleks Sedzielarz working in the Lafayette Book Store
Photo Sophie Braccini

Ask Dr. Harold Mindfulness

By Dr. Harold Hoyle, Ph.D.

It is a new year and as many of us do, I tried to establish some new patterns. I had taken a few stabs at yoga over the years, attending classes, buying books, and I even bought my own yoga mat, which I thought increased my commitment. I mean really, I have my own mat. The new decade seemed like a great time to start back at it.

So there I was at Oakwood in a level one yoga class. My body is not overburdened by flexibility, but I was doing better than I had remembered at the "being present" part of the practice. This experience caused me to reflect on different activities we can practice that are associated with psychological health. Here is a review of the recent research on mindfulness and psychological health.

So, what is mindfulness? Mindfulness is an awareness that comes from paying attention. It is one type of meditation practice; the practice of noticing what is going on in the present moment. This is nothing new. In fact, the practice of attending to the moment is thousands of years old. The recent research on the effects of this practice is new and quite compelling.

One of the first therapies using mindfulness was developed by Dr. Kabat-Zine, a professor at U Mass Medical School, and is called Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). This therapy was originally used for people with chronic physical pain that failed to be managed by the invasive and medication based ther-

pies of western medicine. Thirty years old, this therapy has shown remarkable results in dealing with managing stress reactivity, pain, anxiety, and depressive symptoms.

One of the by-products of paying attention is a state of clarity. Remember back to when you were a kid and you were climbing a tree. You were focused on every turn and twist of the branches. You were in the moment noticing when the branches were too thin for you to go any higher. With modern brain scans we can identify the brain functions of this type of focus and clarity. They are remarkably similar to the state of brain activity that meditation practitioners get into when they practice meditation.

Very often in couple therapy, clients and I spend time talking about how one partner doesn't see or notice what the other is doing. After a conversation, we find out that the person in question is not very practiced at noticing anything. With a few homework assignments around noticing any and all things, they start to see their partner in a new way. The problem is not with the partner, it is with the practice of noticing.

There is a newly published book entitled, The Art and Science of Mindfulness by Dr. Shauna Shapiro. This book collects the western research into one place for the first time. This is a book designed for practitioners, but I believe it can inform the rest of us.

The three pillars of MBSR

are: 1) Formal meditation practice, 2) Informal meditation - this consists of taking deep and conscious breaths throughout the day as many times as you can. It could be hundreds of times a day you notice and take a conscious breath, 3) Yoga or stretching - this gets you noticing your body and what it can and cannot do. The data on these practices suggests that if you participate in these focusing and attending activities you will find clarity and mental focus to be more available to you. Give it a try and get your kids outside climbing some trees.



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Harold is licensed clinical psychologist and a lecturer and in the School of Counseling Psychology, Education, and Pastoral Ministries Santa Clara University. With his wife and two children he is a 14-year long resident of the Lamorinda area. He is a sought after speaker in the areas of parenting, education, behavior with adolescents and children. He has a local small private practice.

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Life in LAMORINDA

Growing a Vineyard

By Sophie Braccini



Susan Captain and her husband in their wine cellar in Moraga

Photo Sophie Braccini

When Jay Ingram, Moraga Parks and Recreation Director, first met with Susan Captain he intended to ask Lamorinda wine maker to organize a wine and food pairing class. But when the elegant Moraga resident arrived to the

meeting in her heavy boots and garden attire, directly from pruning her vines, they started talking about the technical aspects of wine making. From that discussion stemmed the concept of teaching vineyard management as a community class.

"The idea is to teach people how to establish a vineyard," says Captain, "the classes that I will teach are for the wine lover who wants to know what it takes to make wine, for the Lamorinda resident who has been playing with the idea of wine-making and wants to know what is involved, and for the committed budding grower who wants to start things right."

Both Susan and her husband believe that Lamorinda in general and Moraga in particular are ideally positioned to become the next Napa. "We want to share our knowledge with our neighbors and encourage them to start their own development," Susan says, "We want them to become better than us and teach us in turn."

The Captains planted their vineyard five years ago, when their youngest child was ready for college. "I needed to have a new project in my life," says the mother, who is a mathematician by training. When she decided to become a wine grower, Captain attended a series of seminars and viticulture classes at UC Davis, Napa and Santa Rosa Community College.

On their 3.5 acre hillside property, which has magnificent views of the wilderness, grows

3500 plants from different varieties; Petite Syrah, Petite Verdot, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Cab Franc. "Since all the work is done manually and by us, it's not a good idea to have everything to do on all the plants at the same time," says Captain. The Captain's wine has been produced under their name by Parkmon Vineyard. In 2010 they will launch their own label.

Captain's plan right from the beginning was to work cooperatively. They are part of the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association, they partner with UC Berkeley for bio-control research and train young people interested in wine growing. "I've had students from high school working with us since 2005 through the 4H viticulture program," says Captain, "and for two years I have had students from Miramonte High School who have interned with me at the vineyard through what is called the WISE project (a program that allows the replacement of a senior's second semester of English with an independent inquiry into a topic of their choice)."

The series of classes offered through the Parks and Recreation Department in Moraga will take place in the vine-

yard. It will comprise both basic principles of viticulture and practical aspects of small vineyard management. "There will be general information in each session, with specific focus on what is going on in the vineyard at the time of the class," says Captain, "it will be both theoretical and hands-on, and wine tasting will be offered in the cellar after each class."

There are three classes in the series, beginning with Pruning & Training on Tuesday

March 23rd. It will be followed by Canopy Management and Sugar Testing/Harvesting. "We have seen people in the area making a significant investment in a vineyard that was almost completely lost because of poor choices," says Captain. "It is important to learn how to do it right, and as the saying goes 'all good wines start with good grapes.'" Registration is available online at www.moraga.ca.us or by calling 888-7045.

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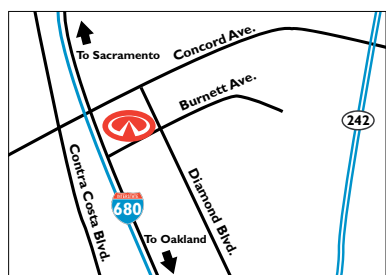
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Life in LAMORINDA

Bread: Staff of Life, or Slice of Illness? (Part 2 of 3)

By Dr. Theresa Tsingis, DCMS

"How can a nation be great if its bread tastes like Kleenex?" - Julia Child



Julia Child had a flair for expression and a palate to match. If I could have a conversation with her I'd counter with, "How can a nation be great, if autoimmune disease is the #3 killer, and its bread has something to do with it?" If you search www.pubmed.com (the government listing of recent medical research) you will find approximately 1,500 references to gluten sensitivity, wheat, and autoimmune disease. These studies wouldn't exist if the connection between gluten and disease was not worth investigating. In this section of a three-part series I will answer some questions most often encountered in my

nutrition practice.

1) How would I know if I have this problem? According to the Mayo Clinic, there are no typical signs or symptoms even for celiac disease, the most severe manifestation of gluten-related problems. The simplest answer could be to think about your family's health history. At this juncture it may be the only tell-tale sign. If you or your relatives (deceased or living) had or have any of the 100+ autoimmune illnesses, there is a chance that underlying gluten sensitivity is at work. The following are autoimmune-related: Anemia, Alopecia (hair thinning), Asthma, Dermatitis, Chronic Fatigue, Colitis, Crohn's, Diabetes type 1 and 2, Eczema, Fibromyalgia, Gastritis, Grave's and other Thyroid diseases, Elevated Liver Enzymes or Hepatitis, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Lupus, Meniere's, Multiple Sclerosis, Myositis (muscle inflammation) Osteopenia, Osteoporosis, Psoriasis, Raynaud's, and Vitiligo (white patches on the skin).

An item of special note is that a family history of Lymphoma, Leukemia, Fatty Liver Disease or Liver Cancer may indicate undiagnosed celiac disease. For some it has been the only (and fatal) manifestation. For susceptible individuals gluten can cause those serious illnesses when the gluten problem goes undetected for years. Yet another factor to contemplate is a growing body of research linking gluten with Learning Disorders (ADD, ADHD), Depression, Anxiety, Eating Disorders and other affective disorders.

2) How is it diagnosed? The best way to find out if there is a gluten problem is to go completely gluten-free for 3 months, and either self-monitor or be monitored by a qualified nutritionist and/or doctor re: symptoms and blood test changes. There are no tests currently available which are sufficiently sensitive and accurate. Blood tests pick up celiac disease with a 33 to 97% sensitivity range and are highly accurate only when the intestines are severely compromised (a condition referred to as total villous atrophy). They are even less accurate with non-symptomatic gluten sensitivity. There are also genetic tests avail-

able (HLA DQ2 and HLA DQ8 are the most common). One test I sometimes suggest to patients is a stool test by Enterolab (see www.enterolab.com), which may provide localized evidence of gluten, dairy, and soy reactions in the intestine. A range of saliva tests, which are easy to do, may be released later this year, and I will review them when appropriate.

Celiac disease (the form of severe gluten sensitivity) is diagnosed by a small intestine biopsy. This test is usually reserved for those with symptoms of chronic diarrhea and abdominal pain, or chronic anemia (adults) and failure to thrive (in infants).

An interesting study compared the predictability of a certain facial morphology (elongated forehead) with mouth ulcers, anemia and recurrent miscarriages (commonly related to celiac disease) and found that specific facial measurements were as reliable as the ulcers in predicting gluten problems.

3) Who should I consult with? Your primary care doctor, gastroenterologist, and/or a qualified nutritionist are key people to go to for consultation. The day-to-day routine is where the rubber hits the road. Going gluten-free is "simple but not easy" in this wheat-based world. The good news - the FDA label laws now require food manufacturers to list all ingredients. The problem is that some ingredients listed are hidden sources of gluten and labels need to be screened. As covered in Part 1, gluten is found in wheat, rye, barley, conventional oats, their derivatives, and other products (eg. soy sauce). Certain makeup and body products can also be an unsuspected source.

A 28 day gluten-free approach is not sufficient to provide feedback or lasting health results. Going beyond 28 days is where nutrition counseling can really help.

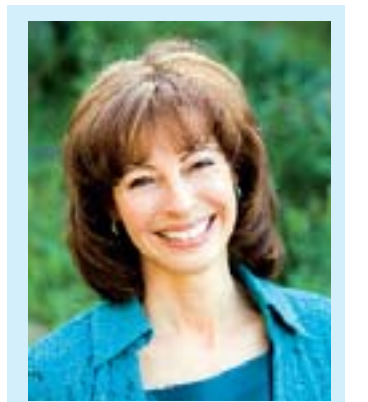
4) Can't I just cut down on wheat? No. Some research suggests that as little as 21 parts per million (ppm) of gluten can continue to promote the autoimmune response for an additional 60 - 120 days after a single incident of exposure. An all-or-nothing approach is really needed when trying to figure out the con-

nection between gluten and symptoms. Every time gluten is eaten during this trial period, the mechanism of inflammation (described in Part I) is induced and the autoimmune cycle is promoted.

5) How can I eat in the "regular" world if I'm gluten-free? In Part Three I will share some tried and true strategies for going gluten free. Having done it myself and as a mother of two, I'm out in the trenches dealing with the issue. I can say that it is simple but not easy. As always, any change seems difficult in the beginning stages.

Cardboard boxes probably taste better than some of the gluten free products out on the market, yet there is hope. For now, here are 2 delicious, "family favorite" mixes - Pamela's Gluten Free Bread Mix and Cherybrook Kitchen's Chocolate Chip Cookie mix. If you bake the bread in the oven, adding olive oil and herbs, you'll wind up with a wonderful, slightly dense crusty loaf of Italian bread. The cookies are among the best I've ever tasted (including gluten-laden cookies). Take heart - eating out is still possible and enjoyable, and a growing number of restaurants have gluten free menus. At our office we provide many tips for maintaining this approach while on-the-go.

I think Julia Child herself would approve of some of the gluten free foods available these days. See you in Part Three.



Theresa Tsingis, DCMS is a nutrition doctor specializing in functional medicine, a branch of nutrition aimed at prevention and research. Her practice, Lamorinda Nutrition, is located at: 251 Lafayette Circle, Suite 240, Lafayette CA 94549. Dr. Tsingis can be reached at 925.283.WELL (9355) or: drtsingis@comcast.net.

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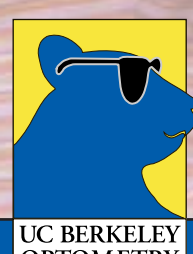



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Life in LAMORINDA

Camp Celebrates Ten Years of Touching Lives, Hearts

By Lucy Amaral



Camp Kesem group last summer

Photo provided

On the surface, Camp Kesem has all the trappings of a great summer camp - arts and crafts, sports, skits, and talent shows. And, for the most part, it is. But look a little deeper and you will see that this camp is much more than cabins, hikes and lanyards. Camp Kesem is a week-long summer camp specifically designed for kids whose parents have or had cancer.

"The lives of children of cancer patients are turned upside down when the joys of childhood are replaced with fears of losing a parent," said Iris Rave, Lafayette resident and founder of Camp Kesem. "At Camp Kesem, they are surrounded by peers who are facing similar challenges and for many, it's the only place where they have friends who truly understand what

they are going through. Kids leave the camp with the strength, hope, friendships and support they need to overcome the challenges they face at home."

Headquartered in Lafayette, the Camp Kesem organization is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. This nationwide, college-student run nonprofit organization currently offers fee-free week-long camps to kids at 22 universities and colleges across the country. Locally, Camp Kesem programs are held through UC Berkeley, UC Davis, and Stanford. Camp dates for 2010 range from June to August depending on the site.

The idea was conceived in 2000 by Rave who, at that time, was a staff member working with Hillel (a Jewish campus organiza-

tion) at Stanford.

"I was hired to engage students and empower them to develop leadership skills and give back to the community," Rave said. "I had experience working with summer camps and saw how they can impact kids in a powerful, positive way. I saw a camp like that as a great large-scale community project for students on campus."

Rave recruited four Stanford student-leaders to participate. After speaking with various doctors and camp directors, they discovered that children whose parents have cancer were largely under served. With this as their target, the student leaders began to coordinate the first camp, choosing the word 'kesem' (Hebrew for Magic) as the name of the camp. In 2001, the first camp

hosted 37 kids on the Stanford campus. In 2002, Rave founded Camp Kesem National as an independent, nationwide nonprofit to help colleges across the country start their own program. By 2009, more than 1,000 kids and nearly 1,000 student volunteers on 22 campuses participated in the program around the country.

The camp is open to student-leaders and campers of any religion and Rave said that the organization's goal is two-fold: Offer a camp that serves these children, and create a platform where college students could develop leadership skills that would translate into real world abilities.

"You cannot underestimate how amazing these college students are," said Sarah Blumenfeld, development director for Camp Kesem. "They have incredible demands yet they commit themselves to this program. They are leading

and running their own nonprofit on a local level." The organization currently has two paid program directors who oversee the on-campus programs to ensure continuity and quality.

As with any nonprofit, fundraising is a constant. Camp Kesem has recently been awarded \$25,000 from Chase Community Giving through Facebook voting. The organization is now in the running for a \$1 million grant through Chase, again with the winner being chosen by the number of Facebook votes.

"We would like to launch 100 more camps in the next three years," said Blumenfeld. "This grant will allow us to bring in more program directors, so we can responsibly and physically manage more camps."

Regardless of that outcome, Camp Kesem will celebrate the ten years of accomplishments it has al-

ready achieved. And, in keeping with its audience, the celebration will be a good old-fashioned birthday party, with a birthday cake, an oversized birthday card, and a whimsical photo-op with very large cutout caterpillar (the organization's logo). The party, to be held February 27th during Camp Kesem's annual National Student Leadership Conference in Los Angeles, will include founding students, camp alumni as well as current student-leaders, and volunteers.

While Rave's ultimate hope is that eventually there won't be a need for Camp Kesem, her goal is for the camp to simply continue. "I hope it will continue to thrive for many years to come," she said. "And, ultimately, every child who has a parent with cancer has a chance to attend a Camp Kesem."

For more information check the Camp's website www.campkesem.org.

Rich Appointed Alcohol Policy Coordinator

By Andrea A. Firth



Jaime Rich (Zaffanella), Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coordinator Photo A. Firth

Jaime Rich (Zaffanella) was recently hired by the Center for Human Development (CHD) to serve as the coordinator for alcohol policy in Lamorinda. Rich will evaluate local policies with the goal to reduce underage access to alcohol throughout Lamorinda, including at Saint Mary's College.

CHD is a community-based organization that offers a spectrum of services for at-risk youth, individuals, families, and communities in the Bay Area. Funded in part by

the County, CHD works to address challenges facing the community including the issue and consequences of underage drinking. The deaths of three teenagers in Lamorinda, in the past three years, have been linked to alcohol consumption.

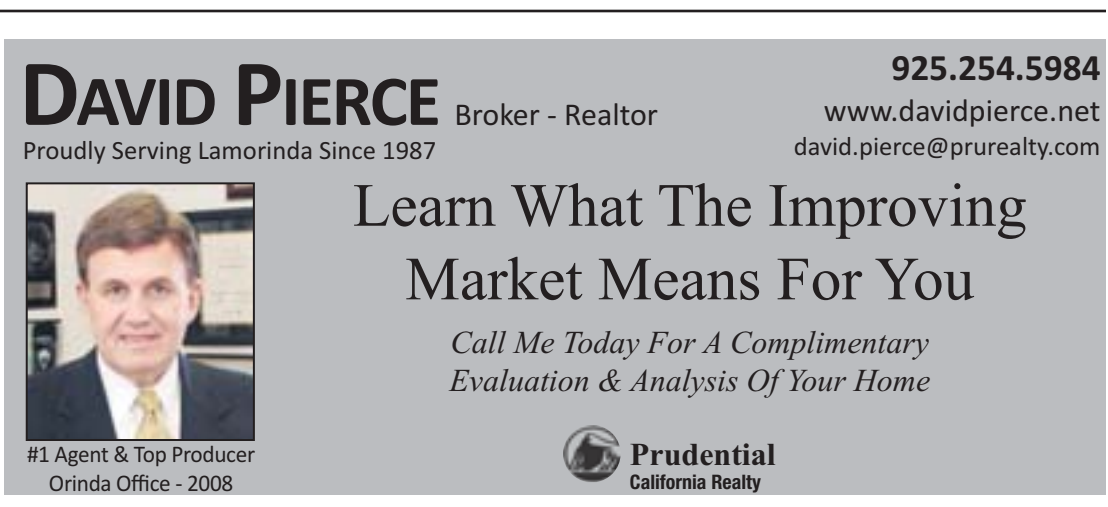
One of Rich's first tasks is to survey a cross section of Lamorinda residents, including seniors, parents, and students, regarding their perceptions related to underage drinking and access to alcohol. "I

want to speak to a variety of residents to ask them about underage drinking in the community and where they think young people are getting access to alcohol," states Rich. She will also be speaking with the owners of local retail outlets that sell alcohol about their experiences with local teens.

"The promotion of healthy behaviors has always been important to me for my family and within my community," states Rich. An 18-year resident of Orinda, Rich felt like the position with CHD had been created for her. "I'm comfortable in front of groups of young people," states Rich, who has a relaxed and open style. "I like the energy that comes from working with youth and imparting knowledge to them," she adds.

Rich developed an interest in prevention as it relates to healthcare issues by the time she attended graduate school at Northeastern University in Boston where she obtained a Masters in Clinical Exercise Physiology. For the past ten years, Rich has been actively involved in student character education and parent education at Wagner Ranch Elementary and Orinda Intermediate Schools and Miramonte High School. She has participated on and chaired innumerable committees and currently serves as the Co-chair of the Healthy Choices Committee at Miramonte.

If you would like to participate in Rich's survey regarding underage alcohol consumption and access, contact her via email at Jaime@chd-prevention.org.



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Life in LAMORINDA

For the Love of Dance, and More

By Lou Fancher



Susan Edgren Williams Photo provided

Susan Edgren Williams has fallen in love—twice. First with dance, and second, with children. Which is why she is the perfect candidate for starting and expanding a new ballet program at Moraga's

Hacienda de las Flores. Williams is bringing her expertise to dance classes for young children through adults.

Armed with an extensive résumé and experience producing community dance events, Williams' greatest asset was acquired before the age of five. "My mom took me to the Ballet Russe, and that did it," she says. "I wanted to be a ballet dancer for the rest of my life."

Moving from Nebraska to Lafayette at the age of 11 did not reduce her ambitions. She danced with the Oakland Ballet in its early days, describing the company as "a little family who all loved to dance." While attending college, she performed and taught steadily, interrupting her dance career only once, to pour her considerable energy into creating and nurturing a family. While her three children may have pulled her from the stage, she continued to instruct, passing to them her appreciation for artistic endeavors. Now grown, her children have chosen work and hobbies in the physical or visual arts.

Williams, her nest recently empty, is turning her attention to the community. Interested in making a contribution to the thriving Lamorinda dance scene, she is developing the new program based on an academy she founded more than ten years ago in Orinda, of which she shares both fond, poetic memories—"I rented a fairy tale studio, with an antler chandelier and wisteria growing over an arched doorway," and practical ones—"I had great students there." She's part magician and part work-horse; two qualities often found in seasoned dance professionals.

Experienced with both young dancers and young-at-heart adult students, Williams is more than just a teacher. She's an educator, providing historical context, musical background and even archival videos of the great ballets for her students. She knows what's impor-

tant ("You've got to keep those little ones moving!") but also emphasizes correct training, performance opportunities and a positive environment. "They need to work hard, get the right messages, and enjoy it," she says.

Williams expects the community to learn along with the students. Ballet, where arms are like rainbows and leaps land like melting butter, is deceptive. One class will rapidly teach that buried in all the grace and ease, dance is a demanding athletic discipline. Williams, with her wise eye and gentle touch, will teach bodies young and old to stretch, sweat, and fall in love with this timeless art form.

For more information about the program, contact Susan Edgren Williams at 925-255-8391, or the Moraga Parks and Recreation Department at 925-888-7045.



Photo provided

Botanical Art Discovery

... continued from page 13

Then photography supplanted painting and for some years, at the beginning of the 20th century, the art form became dormant. A revival movement arose in the early 1980s and in 1995 the American Society of Botanical Artists was founded. It started with 40 painters and there are 1300 of us now."

According to Watters, a painting provides a very different rendition than a photograph. "The colors are exact, the size is always

to scale and we work with a magnifying glass to capture to smallest details." But there is more to botanical painting, a spiritual quality that real artists can capture. "First you observe your plant, you don't glance over it," says Watters, "you choose what you want to represent, you smell it, you feel its energy and you capture its soul." Watters says that when she paints she is appreciative and feels complete. She has noticed the thera-

peutic effect of the art on her students, too.

The exhibition in Berkeley will run January 16-29, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is free with garden admission. On Saturday, January 23 from 1:00-2:30 p.m. Watters will talk about Botanical Art through the ages.

For more information go to <http://www.catherinewatters.com> and <http://botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu>.

Community Service

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 with the subject header In Service to the Community.

LASF Honors the Children of Lafayette with "Starry, Starry Night" Party

Submitted by Soshana Mark



The evening will gather members of the community together in order to recognize the importance of Lafayette's stellar public school system and its role in shaping the future of its students. According to Barbara Serwin, president of LASF, "Our students are part of an extraordinary educational environment. They are engaged and motivated on a daily basis by excellent teachers and caring administrators. We are proud to financially support the educational programs which mold the future leaders of our society."

LASF was founded almost 30 years ago for the purpose of raising funds to support arts and science programs that were threatened with cutbacks. As a group of committed parents responded to this call for additional support, the fledgling foundation initiated an enrichment program delivered by private instructors. Today, LASF's programs consist of art, music, science, social studies, writing development, technology and health education. Additionally, the organization earmarks about half of its budget towards school district programs and services at Lafayette's four elementary schools, Stanley Middle School and Acalanes High School

LASF has sent out its invitations for the annual event and urges everyone in the community to honor our young bright stars. Net proceeds go to secure existing district and LASF programs and services through the remainder of this school year and to minimize deficit spending. For additional information about the annual event, please call the LASF office at 925-299-1644 or visit our web site www.last.org.

The Lafayette Arts & Science Foundation (LASF) will celebrate the achievements of the children of Lafayette – its brightest stars—with a Starry, Starry Night theme. The event will take place on Saturday, January 30th at the Veterans Memorial Building in Lafayette from 6:00-9:00 P.M.

Holiday Toy and Coat Drive a Success

Submitted by Amanda Wentz

Thanks to the generosity of the Lamorinda community, needy local families will be able to enjoy the comfort of a warm coat and the joy of Christmas gifts this holiday season. Roughing It Day Camp, which sponsored the coat and toy drives, received hundreds of coats and over three barrels full of new toys during the month of December.

Items were collected for the US Marine Corp's Toys for Tots program and homeless families at the Bay Area Rescue Mission through the One Warm Coat program. Over 600 coats and 200 toys were brought into the Roughing It Day Camp office in Lafayette during the drive.

"We were thrilled by the support of local businesses, our Roughing It camp families, and Lamorinda schools in helping spreading the word" says Ann

Woods, founder and director of Roughing It Day Camp, who coordinated the drive. "We're really impressed with the large amount of donations we received from the community in these tough economic times, and would like to thank everyone for their generosity. Families from schools such as Happy Valley, Burton Valley, Acalanes, OIS, and Stanley stopped by with numerous coats and toys. Plus local businesses had office drives and some people gave parties and asked everyone to bring donations of toys and coats. People came in with large bags brimming full of coats or toys. It was amazing!"

The mission of the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November and December each year, and distribute those toys as Christ-

mas gifts to needy children in the community in which the campaign is conducted. The primary goal of Toys for Tots is to deliver, through a new toy at Christmas, a message of hope to less fortunate youngsters that will assist them in becoming responsible, productive, patriotic citizens.

One Warm Coat is national non-profit organization that supports and encourages coat drives. It helps individuals, groups, companies and organizations across the country collect coats and deliver them to local agencies that distribute the coats free to people in need. More than one million coats have been provided to those in need at no cost since its inception in 1992. All coats donated at Roughing It have been given to the Bay Area Rescue Mission for distribution to local people in need. THANK YOU from all of us at Roughing It!!

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Putting the T-E-A-M in Public Speaking

By Cristina Kim



Kristen Plant (back); (L-R) Anirudh Sapra, Kate-Marie Engberg, Phoebe Schmidt Photo Chelsea DeVries

We don't usually think of teamwork when we think of a high school class in public speaking, but for Kristen Plant and her students at Miramonte High School, team spirit is both a method and a great learning experience. "We are a team and we like to look out for each other," Plant states. The Miramonte Public Speaking team competes year round in local tournaments, and has often gone on to State and National events. The public will have an opportunity to see what competitive public speaking is all about when the team showcases some speeches and performances on February 3rd at the Miramonte Theater.

At Miramonte, public speaking doubles as both a very popular elective and a competitive team sport. According to the National Forensic League, Miramonte ranks in the top one percent of public speaking programs in the nation. This year's team is ranked very highly, and expects to qualify again for the State and Nationals.

Miramonte excels in three main areas of competitive speaking: student congress (in which students prepare and debate legislation), team debates, and individual events. This diversity allows students to discuss a myriad of topics and even allows for presentations with a theatrical bent.

In spite of the Miramonte

team's prestigious and competitive reputation, Plant works hard to make sure the class is open to all students. "I want this to be a class any kid can take," Plant says, "if just for one year—to gain life skills." Plant also emphasizes that the word "team" is the theme for all members of the class, rookies and veterans alike. Although it is not obligatory to participate in the weekend competitions, the class's curriculum is shaped around the development of competitive speech skills. Ultimately most students participate, probably due to the supportive and fun environment that Plant provides in the classroom.

Plant is quick to credit the team's success on her smart and focused students. "I see my job as a dream job. It makes me feel excited about the future and our country to work with these bright students in such a supportive community," she states. The class is student driven, and all five periods in which the class meets involve students of mixed ages and levels. This allows the veteran students to tutor and help more inexperienced public speakers.

Phoebe Schmidt, Anirudh Sapra and Kate-Marie Engberg have been taking public speaking since their freshman year. They are the three co-presidents of the Miramonte Public Speaking team, and confirm the powerful and life

changing dynamics of public speaking.

Schmidt credits public speaking with helping her become very efficient at organizing ideas and then presenting them in a coherent way. She also enjoys it. "It's definitely a feeling of camaraderie...it's a special program," she says.

Schmidt is also the captain of the lacrosse team, a Girl Scout, and a participant in "Mock Trial," to name a few of her other activities.

Anirudh, an equally active senior and varsity athlete, feels that public speaking has given him confidence in himself and has prepared him for real life situations such as interviews and proposals. A participant in student congress and a national level extemporaneous speaker, Anirudh appreciates how public speaking has opened his mind to alternative viewpoints. Having prepared for different debates he has learned that, "Even if you don't agree you can still respect and understand the other side."

For Kate-Marie Engberg, public speaking has had an even greater impact on her life. Having never been into acting or performing she was reluctant to participate in public speaking, but doing so allowed her to find her passion for comedic writing and film. She was recently accepted for Film Studies at New York University. "I started writing my own speech...I filmed it and it started my interest in writing and filming. Public speaking was the initial base for that interest," Engberg shares.

While public speaking is generally not a spectator sport, the community is invited to hear a wide array of award-winning speeches on topics ranging from social networking to the energy crisis to The Parent Trap. The event begins at 7:30 p.m. on February 3rd. Tickets are \$5 and are available on the Miramonte Web Store (<http://miramonte.revtrak.net/tek9.asp>) or at the door. Light refreshments will be served after the performance.

Grad Night Theme Announcement at Campolindo

By Sophie Braccini



Theme announcement day at Campolindo in 2009 Photo Colleen Stagg

If you've had children in high school, then you know - Grad Night is a big deal. And at Campolindo High School (Campo), the announcement to seniors of the event's theme is a formal affair. "After finals and at the beginning of the second semester, it is hard to keep the seniors engaged," says Laurie Hoyt, Grad Night co-chair, "the announcement day builds up the excitement and gives them something to look forward to." This year's Grad Night theme will be announced on February 8th.

Margaret Qualls is in charge of the parent effort on announcement day, along with her team of volunteers. "We decorate the entrance of the school, where the seniors will arrive, and G-hall in the theme that was chosen," she says, "it gives them a taste of what Grad Night will be like." Seniors will be given an invitation to the party at the same time. At lunchtime, Campo teachers put on a show just

for seniors.

"I am not sure when, specifically, the skit started but it has been around at least since 2004," says Social Studies teacher Paul Verbansky, "it's a way for teachers and staff to partake in the Grad Night festivities and the skit also lets students see their teachers joyfully make fools of themselves." Verbansky and fellow teacher Lisa Herzig spent weeks writing a script that incorporates some of the theme's characters, elements of the Campo community (often inside jokes for seniors) and some pop culture references, with an adventurous storyline.

"The Grad Night skit allows teachers from all grade levels and subjects to work together along with counselors, administrators and other staff," notes Verbansky, "there aren't too many opportunities that you have the Government teacher standing side-by-side with the Math teacher and the Woodshop teacher,

in front of a group of students; especially not when they're dressed in silly costumes. In times of budget crisis and doom-and-gloom scenarios, it is important to remember what wonderful schools we have in our community and how much positive is around us," he concludes, "the short Grad Night Theme Skit is an example of the dedication the Campolindo staff has to the school and its students. It is a fabulous tradition."

Qualls finds that being involved creates fun relationships as well. "On the Grad Night committee I work with parents I've known for years, some I don't know and parents of kids with whom my boys played when they were in 1st grade," she explains.

Hoyt says a few volunteer positions still need to be filled, "We need a chair for donations, and someone to manage volunteers at the event; both are administrative and organizational positions that can be managed off line," she adds.

In the meantime, other committees are already engaged in preparing the decorations, activities, shows and food that will make Grad Night special. "The reason we are doing this is to create a memorable and safe party for our kids," adds Hoyt, "we want to keep them engaged all night, for that last time in their life when they will be together for fun."

To volunteer, contact Hoyt (lauriehoyt@comcast.net) and co-Chair Val Pettegrew (valpettegrew@sbcglobal.net).

Download "Your" story from www.lamorinda.com

Facebook - To Friend or Not to Friend

By Jean Follmer

To friend or not to friend, that is the question. Facebookers know the routine: So-and-so has sent you a "friend request." If you confirm the person as a friend, you're inviting him into your virtual world. Many Facebookers out there have hundreds of "friends." If adults have trouble knowing where to draw the line on Facebook friends, imagine trying to establish that line if you're a kid. Stanley Middle School recently reported an incident in which an unknown Facebook user sent friend requests to a number of Stanley students.

Posing as Stanley Principal David Schrag, the perpetrator successfully "friended" a number of the students. "Several students had approached me asking if I have a Facebook account," said Schrag, who notified both Facebook administrators and the Lafayette Police Department of the situation. "Facebook was really responsive and they took the page down immediately," said Schrag. Due to Facebook's timely response, the Lafayette Police Department did not need to get involved.

The situation served to raise awareness and increase the dialogue about internet safety for Stanley students. "Anyone who you accept as a friend on Facebook has access to all of your in-

formation," said Schrag.

While some middle school parents feel their children are ready to access social networking sites like Facebook, other parents do not. Stanley parent Gint Federas said his 8th grade daughter does have a Facebook account. Federas said he and his wife "friended" their daughter so they can monitor her Facebook activities. "I just go look at her wall every now and then, maybe once or twice a week," said Federas, and he has addressed a few postings he thought were inappropriate by both his daughter and her friends. Federas said his daughter did receive a friend request from the perpetrator posing as Schrag. When she looked at the impostor's information, she saw it was filled with profanities and clicked the "ignore" button.

Another parent of an 8th grade Stanley student, Kristi Buck, said her daughter does not have a Facebook account. "She does not have one and I personally feel that they're too young. I just think there is too much information available for them to safely navigate at this age. What's hard is you can post comments so conversations can be publicly broadcast. I also think it makes relationships very public when they should be private," said Buck,

adding that she recently set up a Facebook account herself so she can learn to navigate it effectively before she allows her daughter to access the site. Buck was pleased with Stan-

ley's reaction to the situation. "I think David (Schrag) handled it well. He's really good about immediately taking action. The good thing is, now the dialogue is going," she said.

Bisel Crowned Campolindo's Mr. GQ

Robby Bisel Photo Doug Kohen

Robby Bisel was crowned Mr. GQ 2010 in Campolindo's annual pageant in which upper classmen compete in categories including talent and question and answer.

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SCHOOL CALENDAR

School Governing Board Meetings

Acalanes Union
High School District
Board Room AUHSD Office
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette
Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2010 at 7:30 pm

Moraga School District
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2010 at 7:30 pm

Lafayette School District
LAFSD Office
3477 School Street, Lafayette
Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2010 at 7 pm

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

Budget:
A tentative Board Meeting is scheduled on Feb. 17 and the superintendent's final budget recommendation will be given at the Special Board Meeting on Feb. 24. Please check the district website for further details: www.lafsd.k12.ca.us.

Budget:
In addition to its regular meetings, the OUSD School Board has scheduled two special budget study sessions: January 22 and February 17.

Kindergarten:
Registration will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 26, and Wednesday, Jan. 27, at the following times:
Burton Valley Elementary,
9:00 - 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Happy Valley Elementary,
8:30 - 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Lafayette Elementary,
9:00 - 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Springhill Elementary,
9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Kindergarten:
Registration for children entering Orinda public schools in August 2010 will be held February 1st-4th, from 9am-1pm, at each of the elementary schools (Del Rey, Glorietta, Sleepy Hollow, Wagner Ranch).

School Finance 101, Monday, January 25, 2010, 7:00 - 8:30 pm. Sponsored by the 32nd District PTA. Learn about looming cuts to our schools, why our local schools are receiving lower per-pupil funding than any other state in the nation, and why parents and the community are being asked to donate money for basic school services. Las Lomas High School Cafeteria, 1460 South Main Street, Walnut Creek. RSVP by 1/22: nmvandell@comcast.net.

A Superintendents' Forum, February 4th at 7:00 pm, is being hosted by the Las Trampas Creek Council of PTAs, at Acalanes High School, in the small theater, 1212 Pleasant Hill Rd., Lafayette, CA. Our local superintendents from the Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda and Walnut Creek School Districts, and the Acalanes Union High School District, will discuss the budget crisis and its affect on their school districts. Bring your questions.

The 30th Annual PTA Advocacy Day, "California Schools in Crisis: Advocating for Solutions", (bus trip to Sacramento), will be held on February 17, sponsored by the Las Trampas Creek and San Ramon Valley Councils of PTAs. Join parents, teachers and superintendents, going to Sacramento to communicate with education experts and our Legislators about California's education crisis, catastrophic budget cuts to our schools, and to learn more about proposed education reform and budget reform, and what you can do. Buses depart at 7:15 a.m., and return by 4:30 p.m., from Lafayette (Our Saviors Lutheran Church, 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette).



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AUHSD Faces \$4 Million in Education Cuts and Teacher Layoffs

... continued from page 1

"The solution is not in Sacramento," stated Stockton in his comments to the Governing Board, "The answer really is in the community." The Governing Board voted unanimously to conduct a public opinion telephone survey to assess the community's willingness to support an additional parcel tax measure to support schools through the current economic crisis. The parcel tax measure, if pursued, will be for a short-term tax; the amount of the parcel tax is yet to be determined. The District is considering placing the parcel tax measure on the ballot in the May mail-in or June election.

A parcel tax to support the AUHSD has been in place for over 20 years. Measure A, a six-year \$189 parcel tax with a senior exemption, will sunset in July of 2010 due to the passage of measure G last November. Measure G is a renewal of the \$189 parcel tax, which still includes a senior exemption but has no sunset provision. The existing parcel tax generates about \$6.7 million annually and has been spent to prevent the elimination of teacher positions and increased class size, and to maintain college preparatory and advanced placement classes, electives, and student support services. To generate \$4 million in revenue to cover the projected deficit

would require a new parcel tax of \$110 to \$115.

Stockton and Learned remain pessimistic regarding the forecast for school funding going forward, noting that the State budget as proposed includes several policy reforms that will be difficult to enact quickly, if at all. Learned cited the example of contracting out services, which may save money but is currently not allowed by law. While the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) concurred that the \$19 billion State budget deficit figure is reasonable, the LAO does not believe that receipt of \$7 billion in federal relief is realistic, leaving the State likely to fall several billion short of the Governor's proposed revenue goals.

"Districts will get hammered in the middle of next year," stated Learned, noting that there will likely be more cuts to education funding if the State's revenue projections fall short. "It's really an \$8 million problem over the next two years," he added.

The AUHSD has planned a series of meetings on January 20th (7 a.m., noon, 4:30 p.m., 7 p.m.) and January 21st (7 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.) at the District offices near Acalanes High School to discuss the school funding situation with parents, teachers, and community members.

Lamorinda Schools

K-8 Districts Prepare for Budget Cuts

By Jean Follmer

Once again, the budget outlook is bleak for California's public schools; Superintendents and school boards across the three districts that serve Lamorinda's elementary and middle school students are taking a hard look at their budgets in an effort to determine from where further cuts might come.

Lafayette Superintendent Fred Brill presented his preliminary budget reduction process and timeline during the School Board meeting on January 13th. "Based on the information we received (from Sacramento) and based on our \$2.4 million structural deficit, my recommendation is that we reduce our budget for 2010/11 by \$1.2 million and again by another \$1.2 million in 2011/12," said Brill. "At the very minimum, we would have to reduce our budget by \$920,000 or we would have no ending balance. We have to look at this as a two-year plan," continued Brill.

Lafayette School Board Member Shayne Silva said, "We're

kind of between a rock and a hard place. I shudder to think about doing this all in one year."

Brill will be soliciting input during parent meetings at each school site; he started with Lafayette Elementary School on January 13th. "The parents were really engaged and asking great questions," said Brill. Brill will present the budget reduction plan at the February 10th Board Meeting. A tentative Board Meeting is scheduled on February 17th and the final recommendation will be given at the Special Board Meeting on February 24th.

Moraga Superintendent Rick Schafer said the Governor's 2010/11 budget is "full of smoke and mirrors." The budget presented by Governor Schwarzenegger assumes receipt of a \$6.9 billion payment by the federal government that Schafer doesn't believe will happen. At this point, Moraga is expecting to receive \$360,000 less from the State of California next

year, but he expects the shortfall to increase by the time the state actually passes its budget. "If the budget was as good as last year, we'd still have cuts," Schafer added.

Shafer said his district expects enrollment to decline next year. He hopes retiring teachers will help the district avoid some resulting layoffs. "When someone loses their job, it's not a nameless number on a data sheet; it's someone you know. We're a people business and, unfortunately, people are going to be affected," said Schafer. The Moraga School District is planning to spend between \$700,000 and \$800,000 in reserves and that will still leave the district with a \$500,000 budget reduction. "We'll use reserves over a 3-year period, so it will be an ongoing reduction," said Schafer.

The outlook is similar in Orinda. "We are projecting at this time in Orinda that there will be a \$678,000 shortfall in 2010/11," said

Director of Business Services Jerry Bucci. That represents a "\$1,325 per student funding reduction from what the district should receive by statute," said Orinda Superintendent Joe Jaconette in a written statement on January 14th. "In the past two years OUSD suffered more than \$2 million in revenue limit reductions. Cuts to the revenue limit or annual per-student finding-are particularly difficult because it represents our largest source of 'on going' general operating funds," continued Jaconette. The Orinda district also expects that the state budget will change by the time it's actually adopted. The District plans to hold special budget study sessions on January 22nd and February 17th in addition to its regularly scheduled board meetings.

For more information, visit the school districts' websites: www.lafsd.k12.ca.us, www.orindaschools.org, www.moraga.k12.ca.us.

Gap Year - A World of Opportunity

By Cathy Tyson



Dan Eden in Poptun, Guatemala during his first week of the program. Photo provided

While his fellow Class of 2009 graduates were attending football games and sitting in college lecture halls, Moraga's Dan Eden spent three months traveling through Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Nicaragua working on a turtle conservation project, obtaining SCUBA certification, building solar water heaters and a host of other non-classroom activities.

"I went to the college fair at Saint Mary's College and wasn't excited about any of the universities

I saw there," said Eden. He did see a table for LeapNow, which advertises itself as "the most unique year of college on the planet" and specializes in study abroad and gap year programs. After doing some research, attending a workshop in San Francisco and with the advice of a college counselor, Eden signed up with Carpe Diem Education - which is associated with LeapNow - an organization whose semester programs are designed to challenge students through service and cul-

tural exchange.

While earning up to 18 units of college credit, he was able to experience the developing world first hand and hone his Spanish language skills. Additional programs from three months to three weeks are offered in Southeast Asia, Australia, India, South America, Africa and Japan.

The group that Eden was a part of had six young men and three young women, including a male and a female guide. Groups can reach a maximum size of 12 participants. Along with their service work, the students had daily Spanish class and journal writing. Everyone was able to post entries on the Carpe Diem blog. Toward the end of the experience, Eden wrote: "I have learned how to live in the moment and be appreciative of my life and most importantly myself."

Like many high school graduates, Eden wasn't exactly sure what he wanted to do after high school. Parents Lisa and Gene Eden were supportive, and recognized that not every student is ready to jump directly into four years of college. "For twelve years it's been all about school," said Gene Eden, "you need to learn about life experience - to get out into the real world. This was an opportunity to go out and try something you may enjoy and push yourself past your comfort zone." The family agreed there's a dominant mentality that most graduates are strongly encouraged to attend a university directly after graduation.

"I would absolutely recommend this to everyone - for me it has been so much better than tradi-

tional college," said Eden. "It was an excellent experience, a chance to be alone and independent." One added bonus - lack of electronics, no phone, no Facebook - which he felt was a very good thing. There were definitely challenging moments, at times rivaling the exertion of a Campo football workout. "We were moving all the time with heavy backpacks, and there were lots of mosquitoes," he notes.

A real highlight of his journey was the turtle project at Playa Langosta, Costa Rica - helping endangered turtles, like the 700 pound Baula turtle the students literally stumbled across. Their goal was to record information on the eggs she laid and bury them in a safer nest away from scavenging raccoons.

Eden is taking it easy at home at the moment, but has signed up for a spring program with Fundacion Mahatma Gandhi in the Dominican Republic, which is completely run by volunteers; it's part of the College of Saint Benedict's Alternative Break Experience. Participants spend time each day tutoring kids and running a soccer program in the afternoon.

He is waiting to hear back from a number of schools he has applied to for the fall 2010 term. He's hoping to get into UC Santa Cruz, but will have to wait like everyone else for their decision.

For more information on the programs noted above, go to www.leapnow.org or www.carpediemeducation.org. The cost of the Carpe Diem program is about the same as in-state tuition and includes all food, rustic accommodations and program activities.

Rheem's 3rd Annual Geo-Bee—Longest Ever

Submitted by Elaine Frank



Rheem Elementary School Geo-Bee winners (L to R): Eric Sweeney, runner-up; Navid Boozapour, 2nd runner-up; and Jacob Westphal, champion.

On Friday, January 8th, Rheem's 3rd through 5th grade students watched an impressive battle of wits and knowledge at the school's third annual National Geographic Bee. Twelve students (7 fifth graders and 5 fourth graders) took part in the final competition: Navid Boozapour, Quinn Cuddihy, Spencer Giglo, Janet Guo, Kate Miles, Olivia Morris, Daniel Nelson, Adam Shafer, Eric Sweeney, Andrew Tseng, Jacob Westphal, and Maria Wong. These students quali-

fied as finalists after being the top scorers in a preliminary written test that was given to all interested 4th and 5th graders in December.

The contest consisted of several rounds of questions, which challenged the finalists' knowledge of U.S. geography, continents, U.S. and world capital cities, and international culture. Part of the competition required finalists to use information on a U.S. map to answer questions about average travel time to work by state.

This year's competition broke all previous records for length and intensity. Although the contest began at 9:00 a.m., an intermission was needed so that the students could enjoy their 10:05 recess before returning to watch the exciting conclusion. After six rounds of questions, Eric Sweeney qualified for the championship round while Navid Boozapour and Jacob Westphal continued to compete for the second slot. After a grueling back-and-forth question and answer session, Jacob

earned a place alongside Eric in the championship round. The two finalists competed "Jeopardy style" by writing their answers on small white boards. The contest was finally decided in an impressive tie-breaker round, when Jacob Westphal became the school champion by answering the following question correctly:

Two peaks, Kibo and Mawansi, can be found at the top of what dormant volcano located about 140 miles south of Nairobi? (Answer: Kilimanjaro)

As the school champion, Jacob received a gold medal, a championship certificate, and the thrill of taking yet another test to see if he will be eligible to compete in the State Bee in April. Also, Eric, Navid, and Jacob each received a \$5 gift certificate to Powell's Sweet Shoppe in Lafayette, and as a special treat, all three boys will be treated to an all-expense paid trip to Starbucks with Rheem Principal, Ms. Frank.

Anyone can brush up on geography with GeoBee Challenge, an online geography quiz at www.nationalgeographic.com/geo-bee, which poses 10 new questions a day from previous National Geographic Bees.

SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS

Campolindo Defeats Miramonte

By Conrad Basset



L-R Spenser McDonald (#2), Chris Hatfield (#14), Carl King (#10), Davis Louie (#24) and Kellen Ito (#25) Photo Doug Kohen

The first meeting of the Campolindo and Miramonte boys' basketball teams on Tuesday, January 12th was a game of quarters. When it was all done, Campolindo had won three of the quarters and the game—with a final score of 56 to 41.

The Matadors allowed the visiting Cougars to score the first nine points of the game. Junior Carl King opened the game with a short jumper and senior Adam Mancebo hit two short baskets as well. Brian Sanders notched a three as well before senior Payam Vadi put the Mats on the board with two free throws. King hit a layup for Campo and senior Chris Hatfield responded with a free throw for the Mats to cut the lead to 11-3 before the Cougars scored six more points for a 17-3 lead. Finally with 1:15

changed baskets: senior Davis Louie recorded a trey and Akin added two more long range jumpers for Miramonte while Mancebo and senior Kellen Ito scored from inside for the Cougars. The Mats led 34-32 with 5:10 left in the third when King fed a pass to senior Matt Keeble who scored and was fouled and hit the free throw. The tide changed at this point as Miramonte did not score again in the period, while the Cougars methodically played strong defense and padded their lead to 44-34 at the end of three.

Other than free throws from Hatfield and McDonald, and a McDonald basket off a pass from sophomore Ross Anderson, Miramonte's offense was stifled by the Cougars, who during a stretch of almost thirteen minutes held Miramonte to just those four points. The balance of the fourth quarter saw Campo pull away behind King's spot up three and four free throws.

King led all scorers with 13 points while Akin led the Mats with 12, all from outside the arc. Ito finished with seven rebounds for Campo while Hatfield had 13 rebounds for Miramonte. After the game, Ito said, "Part of our game plan was to keep the Mats leading scorer, Hatfield, away from the basket and we were happy that we did it pretty well." They held him to just nine points on 2-of-8 shooting. Campolindo coach Matt Watson added, "We caught Miramonte on an off night. I challenged our kids at half time to win every battle and our kids played tough. We won the second half 30-16. I expect our next meeting to be much closer; Miramonte is well coached and has a ton of talent."

The defending DFAL champion Matadors dropped to 2-1 and 8-7 overall.

On Friday night, Cam-



L-R: Troy Akin (13), Matt Keeble (34) and Brian Sanders (22) Photo Doug Kohen

polindo traveled to Acalanes to take on the Dons. The Cougars pushed hard in the first two periods and led by 35-25 at the intermission. The teams played pretty evenly in the second half with Campo churning out a 65-56 win. Sanders had 17 points to lead a balanced Campo attack. Ito added 15 and Mancebo 13. They both had ten rebounds. For the Dons, senior Zach Bloom recorded 18 and senior Jay Fowler scored 11. The win gave Campo (14-4) a 4-0 league record and sole possession of first place in the DFAL.

Miramonte Defeats Campolindo in Third Overtime

... continued from page 1



Miramonte's varsity women get the heart pounding win over Campolindo in their triple overtime game Tuesday night Photo Jordan Fong

Injuries have beset the Cougars who are currently playing without two of their starting guards, senior Rose Fruci and sophomore Mallory Brown, but their teammates have really stepped up. They pushed first place Miramonte to the edge in a three-overtime thriller on the road last week, losing 83-81. Junior Annie Ward hit seven three pointers, notching 37 points on the night. The Matadors were led by senior Stephanie Golden's 23 points and 12 rebounds and junior Liza Katz's (24 points and nine assists) overtime heroics that concluded with a layup with four seconds left to prevent a fourth overtime.

Miramonte moved to 3-0 with the victory over Campo, after whipping Alhambra by 51 points and handling Dougherty Valley by 49 to 42. They do not play again in the DFAL until January 22nd, when they travel to Dublin. Dublin was defeated last week by Dougherty Valley 40 to 36 but beat Las Lomas 70-17.

Last Friday night, the Lamorinda rivalries again heated up

when Campolindo headed over to Acalanes. The Dons and Cougars battled throughout a tight first half, with Acalanes leading 20-18 at the intermission. Campo came out strong in the third period, outscoring Acalanes 20 to 6 on their way to a 53-37 win. Senior Meghan Ringer led a balanced attack with 14 points and five rebounds while junior Chloe Hull added 11. Senior Emani Harrison (20 points) and junior Kiara Harewood (13 points and six blocks) led the Dons who fell to 1-2 in the DFAL. Prior to the Campo game, Acalanes beat Las Lomas and lost on the road at Dublin.

Campo coach Clay Kallam captured the spirit of the league when he said, "The key to this league is win at home against everyone and try to steal one on the road against one of the top teams." He is optimistic that although, "the schedule had us start with three difficult road games -- Dublin, Miramonte and Acalanes, it means we get those teams in Moraga in the second half. Hopefully we'll be able to use the home crowd's energy to our advantage."



Miramonte's Alyssa Johanson (#14) drives past Chloe Hull (#11) of Campo, avoiding a charge Photo Jordan Fong

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Gaels Fall to #14 Gonzaga, Defeat Pilots

Gaels Split First Home Games

By Justine Sgalio



Omar Samhan led the Gaels with an impressive 24 point second half against the Pilots Photo Tod Fierner



Matthew Dellavedova kept the Gaels alive in the first half against Gonzaga with a 15 point effort going 4-for-4 from behind the line. Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's Gaels lost a heartbreaker to the Gonzaga Bulldogs 89-82 at McKeon Pavilion on Thursday, January 14th, but bounced back Saturday, January 16th at home with a 77-72 win over the Portland Pilots.

The Bulldogs took the lead early and kept it Thursday night, dominating the Gaels offensively.

The Gaels kept the margin within six until the 13 minute mark, with the help of freshman guard Matthew Dellavedova who had 15 points in the first half and went 4-for-4 from the three point line. But it wasn't enough hold off the athleticism of the Bulldogs offense.

Gonzaga freshman forward Elias Harris scored 16 points in the first half, and the Bulldogs held Saint Mary's senior center Omar Samhan to just six points. An easy layup by senior guard Matt Bouldin, with just under two minutes to go in the half, put the Bulldogs up by 12—their largest lead. Heading into the locker room it was

45-33, Gonzaga.

The Gaels matched the Bulldogs point for point for five minutes early in the second half, but again the Zags pulled ahead and with 11:28 left to play the Gaels found themselves in a 15 point hole.

Saint Mary's refused to give in and with a tenacious effort the Gaels pulled within four points with just under a minute left in the game. Samhan led the effort with an explosive 25 point second half, but it wasn't enough to pull off the win. Two missed three pointers by the Gaels in the last minute of the game sealed the victory for the Bulldogs' 89-82.

"I'm disappointed in how we played defensively," said Saint Mary's head coach Randy Bennett. "We have to learn to compete defensively against good teams...it's a weakness of ours right now and that's something we really need to improve on going forward."

Coming off the loss against Gonzaga, the Gaels hosted the Port-

land Pilots (1-1). The Gaels took a 9-8 lead with just over 14 minutes to go in the half after 3-pointers by senior forward Ben Allen, Dellavedova and junior guard Mickey McConnell.

The Pilots and the Gaels battled for the lead throughout the half, keeping the margin under just four points. After 12 lead changes, the Pilots went into halftime with a 31-30 lead over the Gaels.

The second half brought another explosive offensive effort by Saint Mary's Samhan, who had 24 of his 28 points in the second half. The Gaels took the lead at the 18 minute marker. A 3-pointer by Portland senior guard T.J. Campbell with 17:37 to go in the half gave the Pilots the lead but Saint Mary's regained it on the next possession. The Gaels held the lead the remainder of the game, and despite a run by the Pilots which pulled them within two with 1:51 left to play, Saint Mary's came away with the 77-72 win.



Following last week's games, Randy Bennett noted the Gaels need to improve defensively. Photo Tod Fierner

Senior forward Ben Allen, who had 16 points for the Gaels, was glad for the win but focused on the road ahead. "We held our own on our own court," said Allen. "Now that we've got this win, we

can focus on San Diego." Bennett is also glad for the win, but admits that defensive improvements are still necessary. "It was a good win for us," said Bennett. "But we still have to improve

defensively...we've got to be more disciplined defensively. We have to compete better."

The Gaels take on the San Diego Toreros at McKeon Pavilion on Thursday, January 21 at 8 p.m.

 For up to date schedules see: www.smcgaels.com

- Thu, Jan 21 MBB San Diego McKeon Pavilion 8:00 PM
- Sun, Jan 24 MTEN UC Davis Moraga, CA 12:00 PM
- Thu, Jan 28 WBB Pepperdine McKeon Pavilion 7:00 PM
- Fri, Jan 29 WLAX Denver (Saint Mary's Stadium) 3:00 PM
- Sat, Jan 30 WBB Loyola Marymount McKeon Pavilion 2:00 PM
- Thu, Feb 4 MBB Santa Clara McKeon Pavilion 8:30 PM
- Sat, Feb 6 MBB San Francisco McKeon Pavilion 8:00 PM
- Sun, Feb 7 WTEN Denver Moraga, CA 1:00 PM
- Thu, Feb 11 WBB Gonzaga McKeon Pavilion 7:00 PM

Schedule is subject to change. Confirm at www.SMCGaels.com

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Matador Defense Shuts Down Dons

Lamorinda Teams Deadlocked for First Place

By Alex Crook



Don's goalkeeper Angela LaScala-Gruenwald

Acalanes girls' soccer boasts a large fan base—however; on Friday, January 8th the crowd's support was not enough to bolster the Dons offense. Acalanes took on Miramonte in a rivalry match-up and the Matadors defense, led by senior goalkeeper Shelby Church, shut out the Dons, 2-0. The shutout was Church's first of the season and Acalanes' first home loss on the year. Church made 12 saves.

Visiting Miramonte entered

the match with an even 2-2 record in league play, which now improves to 3-2. The Dons came in at 3-1, but dropped to 3-2. Both teams now find themselves in a three-way tie for first place in DFAL with Campolindo.

The match began slowly, with a couple of scoring opportunities for both teams. Then at the 17:32 mark, Matador senior forward and captain, McKenna Deback, found the far side of the net

open, beating Dons' senior goalkeeper Angela LaScala-Gruenwald for the easy 1-0 lead. Eleven minutes later at 6:31, Miramonte sophomore forward Katherine Fearing was denied a two-goal lead by LaScala-Gruenwald, who deflected the ball out of the goalie box.

Heading into halftime, Miramonte was up 1-0.

With 27:46 left in the second half, the visiting Mats struck again, this time the goal came off

the foot of junior forward MacKenzie Martin.

Acalanes offensive attack had multiple looks, but the Matadors defense prevented the Dons from capitalizing.

"We put in a good effort. We were coming off of a long break, we played well, and these were two good teams," said Acalanes coach Tom Ginocchio.

The Mats, riding a two-game winning streak, returned home to battle Las Lomas on January 13th; the game proved to be a defensive battle ending in a 0-0 tie. That same day Acalanes hit the road for a game at Dougherty Valley, which also resulted in a tie, 1-1. Campolindo beat Alhambra, 2-1, for the lead in the DFAL.

January 15th the three-way tie was restored. Acalanes defeated Dublin 2-0, Campolindo tied 0-0 with Las Lomas and Miramonte tied with Alhambra 0-0. All three Lamorinda teams are now 3-2-2.



Photo Peter Simonsen

LMYA Volleyball Season to Start

Submitted by Eric Stranding



LMYA youngsters before a Saturday volleyball match. Photo Eric Stranding

Lafayette-Moraga Youth Association (LMYA) volleyball starts its fifth season with Evaluation Day January 31st. This year the season is nine weeks. It includes a number of perks to capture the excitement

of kids and parents alike: a volleyball picnic, free practice ball for kids, free club-quality game balls for coaches, clinics, and high school players to help parents design and run practice.

The league is open to boys

(two per team) and girls (up to ten per team) in three age groups: fifth graders (playing at JM middle school), sixth and seventh-eighth grades (playing at Stanley). For the pleasure of our youngest age division, we play matches with a special ball called a 'volley light.' In addition, we use special rules that help these players get their serve in.

At the end of the season there is an award ceremony. We give out beach-volleyball t-shirts for teams making it through playoffs to the finals of Gold, Silver, or Bronze. Everyone plays equally and we normally award nearly 100 t-shirts. LMYA volleyball is \$185 for March to June. Registration is on-going. For more information and registration go to www.lmyasports.com.



Photo Peter Simonsen

Acalanes Boys' Soccer Second in DFAL

Submitted by Nancy Kaplan

Acalanes improves to 11-1-1 and 5-2-0 in league play and second in the DFAL behind Dublin.

Date	Opponent	Score	Goals	Saves
January 6	Alhambra	2-1	Chow-Daniel, (Carda), 35' Carrillo, N, (Autran), 56'	Acalanes: 1 Alhambra: 2
January 8	Miramonte	3-0	A: Autran (Kloth), 7' A: Carda (Autran), 9' A: Helfrich (unassisted), 67'	Acalanes: 1 Miramonte: 6
January 11	Piedmont	0-0		
January 13	Dougherty Valley	1-0	Chow-Daniel (Kloth) 11'	Acalanes: 6 Dougherty Vally: 10
January 15	Dublin	0-1		Acalanes: 2 Dublin: 4

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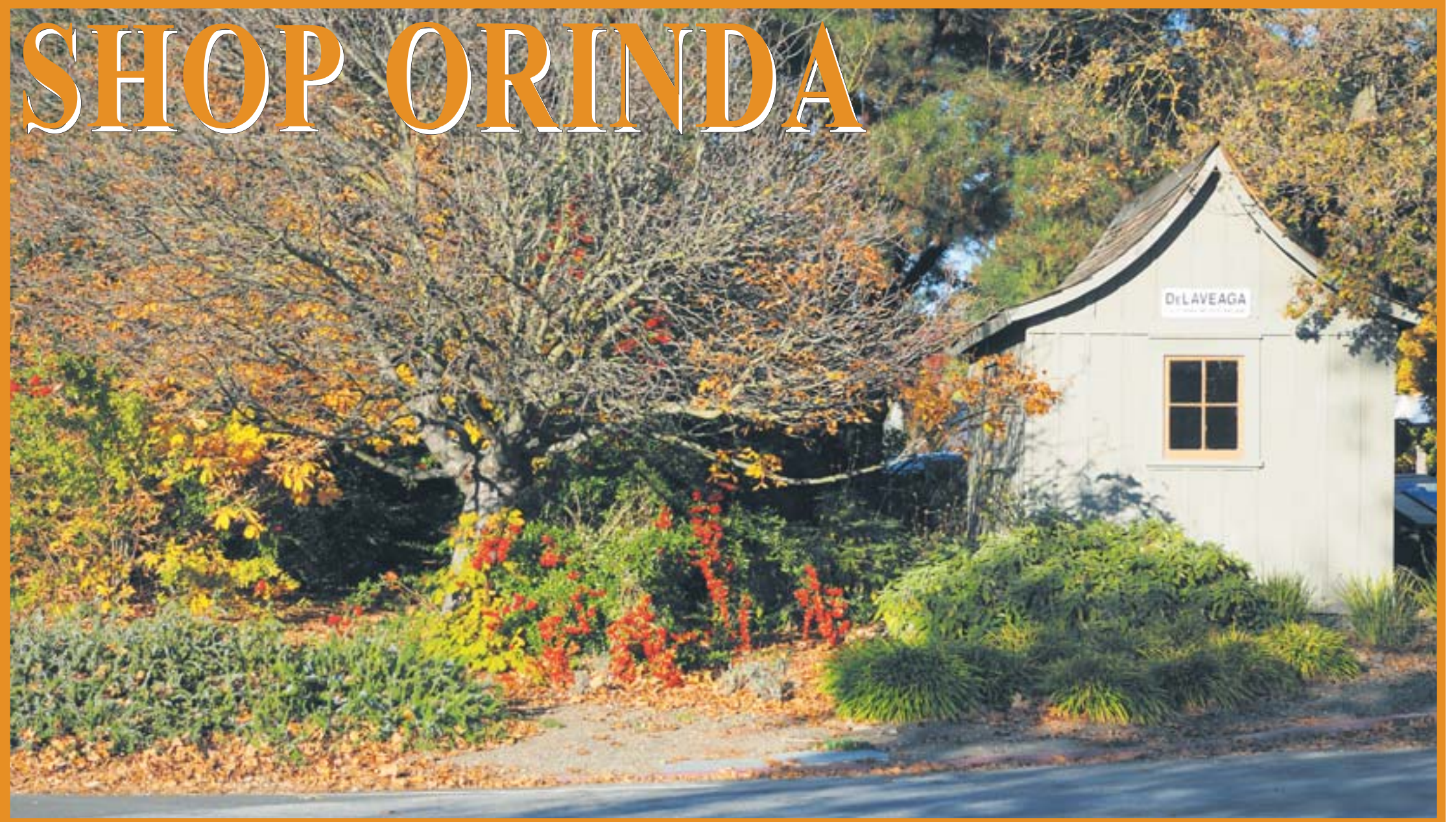
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