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Volume 03 Issue 25

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Wednesday, February 17, 2010

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Talk of the Towns

By Sophie Braccini, Andrea A. Firth and Cathy Tyson

Quote of the Week:

"While Lamorinda residents spend 24 to travel 4 (minutes and miles) our smiling leaders shovel sand in celebration of a fourth bore for '24.' What a snore!" – See Letters to the Editor, page 8.

On the evening of February 11, the governments of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda met at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center to share perspectives. Three issues were covered: the Police Services Study that was commissioned by Lafayette and Orinda; Revenue Enhancement options/ballot measures; and Downtown Revitalization ef-

forts. The polite exchange provided the three Councils and Town/City Managers the opportunity to take stock of each other's projects without venturing toward debate or negotiation. The three communities have much in common, yet they traverse parallel tracks that seldom cross. See page 3 for the full report.

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AUHSD Proposes Parcel Tax

By Angela LaScala-Gruenewald

While politicians in Sacramento continue attempts to revive California's plummeting economy, the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) Governing Board met in Lafayette on Tuesday, February 2nd, to approve a resolution for an Emergency Educational Parcel Tax. Even with the passage of Measure G in November of 2009, the district still faces a \$4.8 million revenue shortfall for the 2010-2011 school year. To help alleviate this deficit,

the resolution will present a five-year parcel tax to voters in April (as a May 4th mail-in ballot). The proposed \$112 per parcel tax provides for a citizen's oversight committee, offers a senior exemption and, if approved, would raise approximately \$4 million for the district.

The Board believes a parcel tax is necessary to avoid the severe loss of science, foreign language, English, social studies, arts, and mathematics classes. Board members voted unanimously to put forward the

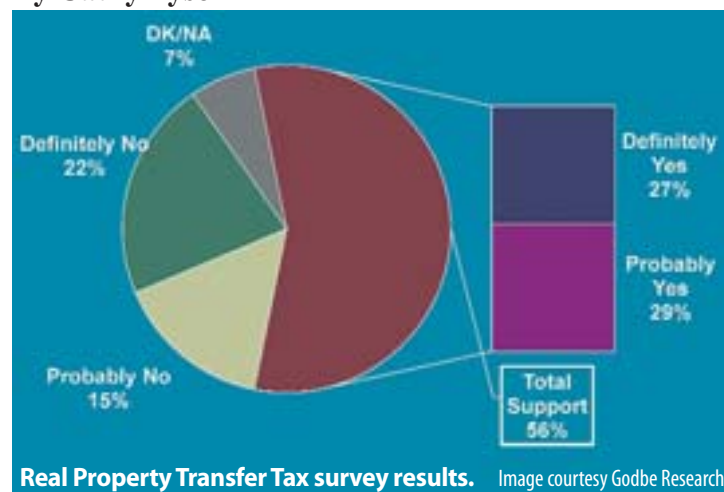
five-year tax that would begin July 1, 2010, and would reduce the district's budget deficit to \$800,000. If the measure passes, up to 50 teachers could retain their jobs. Even so, the future of Del Oro High School and several classified positions will be undecided and face possible elimination (See related AUHSD budget article on page S5.)

The meeting began with a public hearing.

... continued on page L3

Charter City and Transfer Tax Survey Results Promising

By Cathy Tyson



In a recent survey, 400 Lafayette voters were asked about their potential support for making Lafayette a charter city and queried about support to increase the property transfer tax rate, quality of life and spending priorities.

Godbe Research completed the twenty minute phone survey and found, "Overall Lafayette voters placed major city services including preserving open spaces, repairing streets and road, reducing traffic congestion and reducing crime at the same or higher level of importance than preventing local tax increases," noted a summary presented at the February 8 City Council meeting.

A total of 56% of respondents answered definitely yes or probably yes to the question, "To maintain and improve city services; including: repairing and maintaining local streets; extending library hours and services; maintaining police services; preserving open spaces; maintaining downtown landscaping and increasing parking; Shall the City of Lafayette increase the Real Property Transfer Tax, which is collected when a property is sold, by \$7 per \$1,000 dollars of the sales price?" A simple majority, just over 50%, is the threshold needed to pass the measure.

... continued on page 2

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Orinda's 25th



By Andrea A. Firth

July 1st, 2010 marks the 25th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Orinda, and the City has a long list of events and activities planned to commemorate the event throughout the year (see sidebar). The July 4th parade, which was established about the same time that the City incorporated, will be a focal point for the celebration. read on page A7

Extreme Pizza Party



By Susie Iventosch

It's not every day you see a traditional wood-burning pizza oven in the suburban family kitchen. And, though it did not top the list of bells and whistles Katy and Mike Keough of Moraga expected to install in their newly remodeled kitchen, they're sure glad they did! "It's been really fun," said Katy. "Everybody gets involved in the process and the kids have fun ... read in our new "Our Homes" section

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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, February 22, 7:00 pm
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

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

Design Review Monday, February 22, 7:00 pm
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center in the Arts & Science Discovery Center at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Circulation Commission Monday, March 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



Bicycle Thief, 1/28/10 An unknown suspect entered the bicycle room at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center and cut the lock on a bicycle. Video surveillance showed the bicycle thief cut the lock and rode off in an unknown direction. The theft was cross-referenced with the theft of another bicycle from the same location three days earlier. The bicycle was valued at \$1,500.

about 5'10" and 200 pounds walking away from the front porch toward a truck. The citizen described the truck as a 1980s maroon Toyota pickup truck and said she saw another white male sitting in the truck with a dog. The dog is described as a medium-sized white dog with brown spots.

Smash & Grab, 2/3/10 An unknown suspect smashed the left rear window of a Carol Lane resident's car and made off with her laptop and briefcase. Police canvassed the area and were unable to locate any possible witnesses. We urge citizens to deter would-be thieves by removing all valuables when exiting the vehicle.

Recall Victim? 2/5/10 A Mt. Diablo resident called police to report her 2003 Toyota Corolla had been stolen during the night by an unknown suspect. She had not given anyone permission to drive the vehicle.

It Probably Wasn't McGruff, 2/1/10 An unknown suspect broke the front window of a Pleasant Hill Circle residence and entered the home in broad daylight. The suspect ransacked dressers and closets of each of the bedrooms and left with jewelry and electronics. A possible witness reported she'd seen a white male in his mid-40's,



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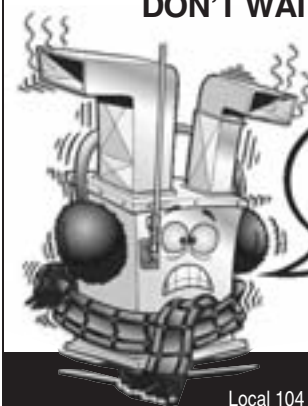
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Charter City and Transfer Tax Survey Results Promising

... continued from page 1

The California Constitution allows a city to use either statewide general law to govern or to adopt their own municipal constitution as a charter city. A charter city has the power to legislate and regulate in response to the needs of the community. The impetus for the survey was a recommendation of the Finance Review Task Force for revenue enhancement options to primarily deal with a huge, over \$15 million, road repair backlog.

"This has a moderately good chance of being successful," said Bryan Godbe, President of Godbe Research. The current real estate transfer tax is \$1.10 per \$1,000 of assessed value of a home that is

sold - half of this amount, \$.55/\$1,000 goes to Contra Costa County, with the remaining half going to the City of Lafayette.

Godbe also said that the survey recorded an all time high: A total of 97% respondents said they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with Quality of Life in Lafayette. He said he'd never seen anything like it. Lafayette beat out former winner Marin County - they scored of 92% on "Quality of Life."

One of the main arguments in favor of moving Lafayette from a general law city to a charter city is that funds raised must stay in Lafayette - neither the County nor the State can grab these tax rev-

enue dollars. Funds raised would go toward repairing the 17% of Lafayette streets that have received a failing grade. Other benefits could include increasing funding to preserve open space, additional police services, increasing parking - all high priority concerns of those polled.

Various levels of taxation were surveyed - \$9 per \$1,000 of assessed home value, \$7, \$5 and \$3. At the \$5 level 59% of respondents answered probably yes or definitely yes that they would support this increased transfer tax rate.

"In a 'normal' year, one not fraught with the housing bubble collapse, we collect about \$284,000

in property transfer taxes. Since this rate (at \$5/\$1,000) is nine times higher than the current rate - that translates to about \$2.5M annually," said Tracy Robinson, Administrative Services Director.

By comparison, other Bay Area charter cities have substantially higher property transfer tax rates: Berkeley \$15/\$1,000, Alameda \$12/\$1,000 and Piedmont at \$13/\$1,000.

"This is a gigantic leap for us - it allows us to solve the police services problem and road problem in one swoop," said City Manager Steven Falk. "There's a big upside - we should pursue this further."

Economic Feasibility Survey Results In

By Cathy Tyson

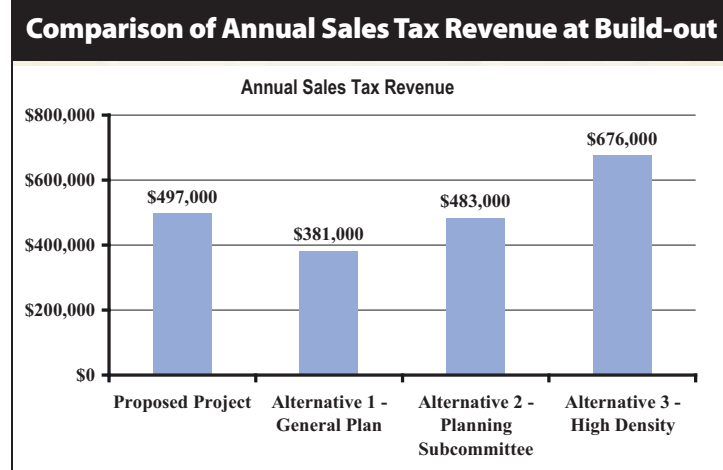


Chart of: Downtown Lafayette Specific Plan Draft Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis by Seifel Consulting

In order to get a better handle on potential monetary impacts of the proposed Downtown Specific Plan (DSP), Seifel Consulting was contracted to provide an analysis to compare key economic and fiscal impacts of the alternatives listed in the DSP Environmental Impact Report. These alternatives represent a range of options to guide future development over the next

twenty years. Currently Lafayette's General Plan, adopted in 2002, dictates the community's vision of the future by spelling out physical development via land use, circulation and environmental goals and policies.

The four scenarios are: the proposed Downtown Specific Plan project, Alternative 1 - keeping the existing General Plan, Alternative

2 - the Planning Commission version with slightly less residential and commercial development, and Alternative 3 - a high density version. In almost all instances the proposed Downtown Strategic Plan and the Planning Commission version had very similar results.

"We looked at employment generation, revenue generation and cost of capital improvements and maintenance," said Libby Seifel, President of Seifel Consulting, Inc.

Unlike Goldilocks sampling porridge, it's hard to know which one will be "just right" and therefore adopted by the City Council but the Feasibility Survey at least clarifies in dollars and cents the differences between the proposed plans.

The survey found, not surprisingly, that more growth and development equals greater tax revenue and employment for the city. However it should be noted that this is just one measure that the Council will be looking at in eval-

uating the various plans - quality of life, traffic impacts and resident input will all play a role in the final decision.

"This Council has not fiscalized land use. This is a tool for financial planning. We look at a lot of other things - quality of life and environmental concerns," said Council Member Don Tatzin.

The Draft EIR is available online at www.lovelafayette.com; public comments are welcome through 5:00 p.m. on March 16, 2010 - the end of the review period. The very thorough 38-page "Downtown Lafayette Specific Plan Draft Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis" report is also available at www.lovelafayette.org by clicking on Agendas, Staff Reports & Minutes, then click on 2010 City Council Agendas, then click on the agenda for the February 8 meeting, and finally click on agenda item 2.1 "Seifel Powerpoint."

Investigating Other Options for Deer Hill Road Zoning

By Cathy Tyson

Due to the outpouring of impassioned residents' pleas over the course of two meetings, the City Council decided that lowering

the density of the controversial Christmas tree lot parcel at the corner of Deer Hill Road and Pleasant Hill Road from the current maximum 35 dwelling units/acre to 17 dwelling units/acre was not the best solution to the zoning conundrum that the City itself started.

Concerned residents strongly preferred that although the city was proposing down-zoning, reducing potential development size on the property, the proposed re-classification was still not acceptable.

There was some confusion among residents at the February 8th City Council meeting about what exactly was being proposed. Many argued initially against a change in zoning - not knowing that the proposed change would mean less dense development at the site.

City attorney Mala Subramanian clarified right at the very beginning of the proceedings that



Corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Deer Hill Road Photo Cathy Tyson

there is no proposal for development at that site, and the city is proposing to reduce the zoning that has been in place since 1974 - Administrative/Professional/Office/Multi-family Residential, which allows for up to 35 dwelling units per acre to the classification Low Density Multi-Family Residential which allows up to 17 dwelling units per acre.

Eliot Hudson summed up the crowd's desire to preserve the semi-rural nature of Lafayette, "We want no development - if there has to be development - the smallest amount possible - Does everyone agree with that?" Attendees replied with a vibrant round of applause and shouts of "Yes!"

Even an attorney for Anna Maria Dettmer, the owner of the parcel, came to clarify the current situation and put to rest some ru-

mors that have sprouted up. He said there will be no low income housing on the site, that Ms. Dettmer has no plans for a project, that the grading that was done many years ago was approved and that the Las Trampas earthquake fault that runs through the property also runs through most of eastern Lafayette. His main point was that the City of Lafayette initiated this process and recommended that the City Council take no action at the moment.

In a four to one vote, City Council members decided to direct staff to look at single family zoning options and report back in April. Most agreed that it's a rather isolated spot, not walkable, and not really in-fill development. "Multi-family is the wrong use for that parcel. I favor going back and starting over," said Council Member Carl Anduri.

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(a pdf reader is required to view the pages.)

Talk of the Towns

(Or, Talk of One Town and Two Cities)

... continued from page 1

Our coverage of the Tri-City Meeting that took place on February 11th is presented on this page in the order of the three main agenda items that were addressed that evening, to illustrate the similarities and differences that exist in Lamorinda's civic landscape.

Police Services

The first item on the agenda for discussion among the three municipalities was the result of a police services study commissioned by the cities of Lafayette and Orinda in conjunction with Danville. Lafayette and Orinda contract with the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office for police services; the Town of Moraga maintains its own police force. With the pension costs associated with the Sheriff Office's contract projected to possibly double within the next seven years, both Lafayette and Orinda are looking for a less costly alternative to police service delivery.

Of the several different approaches to police service evaluated in the study, which included the option for a Lafayette-Moraga-Orinda police department, the lowest cost alternative for Lafayette is contracting for services from the city of Walnut Creek, according to City Manager Steven Falk. However, Falk acknowledged that there are many sources of uncertainty in the police service picture including how rapidly the County pension costs will increase and the possibility of a pension reform measure on an upcoming ballot.

Orinda's City Council was less comfortable with the financial data presented in the consultant's study. While contracting with Walnut Creek appeared to be a possible option, City Manager Janet Keeter explained that some substantial costs, such as the administrative overhead and insurance deductibles that would be part of a Walnut Creek contract, were not reflected in the study's numbers.

Moraga Town Manager Mike Segrest indicated that there is general satisfaction with the police services provided in Moraga, but he acknowledged that they face challenges with recruitment, high turnover, and limited services in the small department. Segrest explained that the Moraga Council had not seen the results of the police service study and were just beginning to be briefed on the issue.

Orinda's Mayor Tom McCormick raised the issue that the CALPERS pension program, a defined benefit program, is not offered to Orinda's staff. Thus forming a local police agency with this benefit could present an inequity among the City employees. Lafayette City Council Member Don Tatzin concurred, noting that Lafayette would face the same issue. Tatzin felt trying to recruit qualified officers without a defined benefit program, currently the standard offered by almost every city in California for law enforcement employees, could present a real hurdle.

"The quality of our services is wonderful and that is not something that we want to jeopardize," added Orinda's Vice Mayor Victoria Smith.

"Keeping the options open seems like the appropriate position through the next year," stated Lafayette's Mayor Brandt Andersson. Falk and Keeter will be meeting with the Sheriff and County Administrator in early March to discuss the ability of those offices to establish a more stable and predictable contract pricing program. Both cities will also begin to explore the option of contracting for police services with Walnut Creek.

Revenue Enhancement

Item number two on the agenda was revenue enhancement options for the three communities. The primary concern for all three is road repair, with Orinda leading the pack with a staggering \$73 million price tag (as estimated by the Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission), and the dubious distinction of the worst roads in Contra Costa County. Moraga staff estimates that it would require \$2 to \$3 million a year to get the neigh-

borhood and collector road system to a satisfying service level; the problem is that Moraga's budget for fiscal year 2009/2010 street maintenance is \$395,000. Lafayette has approximately \$15 million worth of unfunded road repairs.

City Manager Steven Falk explained that both Orinda and Lafayette were on a similar track - the cities recently completed surveys looking at options for potential ballot measures. Lafayette's survey examined voter support for becoming a Charter City - which is an entity that can levy an increased Real Property Transfer Tax (RPTT) and keep the proceeds to spend on infrastructure. Citizens would need to approve becoming a Charter City and approve an increase in the transfer tax; both options need a simple majority to pass. The current transfer tax is \$1.10 per \$1,000 of home value, payable when a home is sold. Various levels of a RPTT were polled with solid support at \$5/\$1,000 of assessed value. Still in the early stages, it's unclear whether the Lafayette City Council will go forward with putting this measure on the ballot.

Orinda's City Manager Janet Keeter reported that their survey showed a slim majority of support for a \$50 million Infrastructure Bond Measure to fix roads, storm drains and improve safety, but it did not approach the elusive two-thirds supermajority vote necessary to pass. Other alternatives were queried: increasing the real property transfer tax, establishing a parcel tax, increasing the local sales tax, and a utility users tax. None of these garnered more than 48% support. The City Council decided to not move forward with any measure at this time.

The Town of Moraga was not as far along as Lafayette and Orinda. Town Manager Mike Segrest said the top recommendation of their Revenue Enhancement Committee was a Benefit Assessment District to deal with infrastructure. He noted that this option would require additional study and analysis and that they plan on spending the next year and a half or so to try and build grassroots understanding of Town finance and the different options available to increase revenue.

Downtown Revitalization

Orinda Council Member Amy Worth pointedly characterized the issue of downtown revitalization. "Our suburbs were developed years ago according to a similar model that now needs to evolve," she said, "we have a lot of residents who will want to downsize in the years to come while staying in Orinda, and our new young families want to see a more vibrant downtown that offer more opportunity for both shopping and recreation, accessible to pedestrians and bikers." Worth added that she believes that the three Lamorinda communities are faced with similar needs; suburbs do not want to be just a collection of bedroom communities anymore, and need a different more integrated model.

Speakers from each government talked about how they are trying to reach this objective. "We have been working on the Downtown Specific Plan for two years," said Lafayette City Manager Steven Falk, "we conducted 60 public meetings, proposed a first draft plan last year that was not so warmly received and are now in the process of restudying it. We anticipate having a draft ready in July." According to Falk, one of the difficulties is the split between one part of the population, which favors a more sustainable and compact downtown close to mass transit, and more traditional residents who are concerned about losing the charm of the downtown they love. "It is a balancing act," commented Lafayette Mayor Brandt Andersson, "people like things the way

they are, but downtowns need to renew themselves."

Andersson was followed by Orinda Mayor Tom McCormick who said that with the proper mass transit and pedestrian access it is possible to increase housing density and see traffic go down. Orinda presented its plans for developing the City's downtown districts as well. The part that interested Lafayette the most was when Orinda City Manager Janet Keeter explained that the City was considering allowing building heights up to 55 feet in the downtown areas. "We will have setback rules" added Keeter, "people won't see just series of high walls."

Moraga was the only community to report that the zoning process of its downtown area is complete "as of yesterday," said Town Manager Mike Segrest, "and after seven years in the making." Council Member Mike Metcalf warned that when the process takes too long, the public interest wanes until the last minute when residents suddenly wonder what is going on. Segrest explained that Moraga's next step would be to negotiate a development agreement and try to ensure that the objectives of revitalization included in the plan actually materialize.

S. Braccini

The End

The meeting concluded with updates from each municipality. For a moment it seemed that the mood of the meeting might move from one of polite listening to lively debate when Moraga Mayor Ken Chew engaged his counterparts on the question of off-leash dog parks. "We debated the issue of our Rancho Laguna Park last night," he said, "and among the 37 members of the public who spoke, seven where from either Lafayette or Orinda. You may have a need there, do you have a project to develop such a facility?" "No," firmly answered McCormick, "you use our roads, we use your parks!" Lafayette, on the other hand, reported working on a dog park project.

Finally, the audience heard about the different ways our local governments communicate with their constituencies, emphasizing the need to educate and inform. Although all use various hard copy and electronic media, Lafayette will be the first to offer the City Manager's Friday Summary on Facebook, while Orinda claims bragging rights to being the first to be followed on Twitter.

S. Braccini

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Civic News Moraga



Public Meetings	
Town Council	Wednesday, February 24, 7:30 pm Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo
Special Tri-Agency Meeting	with MOFD and City of Orinda Wednesday, March 3, 7:00 pm Garden Room, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way
Planning Commission	Tuesday, March 1, 7:30 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Design Review	Monday, March 8, 7:00 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

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 Moraga Citizens' Network: www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

• Police Report •



weapons. Thank you Wikipedia for the definition.

E-mail scam, 2/01/10 Someone accessed a Woodminster Drive resident's e-mail account, then used the reporting person's name to send a mass email to all contacts - stating that the subject was in another country and needed money. This reporter received one of the requests. J.C. - I know you're not in London and didn't lose your wallet there.

D.U.I., 2/06/10 Police pulled the driver of a silver Honda over for driving erratically on Moraga Way near School Street. The 16-year-old male was driving while intoxicated; he had a blood alcohol level of .11, above the legal limit of .08. The young man was released to a family friend at the request of the driver's mom who was out of town.

Traffic accident, 2/04/10 A 90-year old driver was driving his 1994 Toyota Camry on Moraga Road just past the high school. His vehicle drifted right and struck a Ford Explorer parked at the curb. Fortunately the incident occurred a bit after 4:00 so there weren't very many students around. Thankfully no one was injured.

Property turned in for destruction, 2/04/10 A Moraga citizen brought shurikens into the police department for disposal. This Japanese concealed weapon is more commonly known as a "throwing star." Not only do they protect and serve, they get rid of our

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New Appointees for Commissions and Boards

Returning incumbents take the lion's share

By Sophie Braccini



Lori Salamack and Jay Ingram (right side of photo) set up charts to facilitate the Council's discussion. Photo Sophie Braccini

For the Town of Moraga to have six applicants for four vacant chairs on the Planning Commission is not unusual; however, that the Town received 13 applications for 4 chairs on the Parks and Recreation Commission indicates uncommon enthusiasm for voluntary service to the Town, possibly due in part to the interest many dog owners have taken of late in that commission's proceedings. Despite the surge of new volunteers the Council, which interviewed all of the applicants between February 3rd and 9th, decided to reappoint the incumbents, who had all reapplied for their seats.

The two-year term on the Parks and Recreation Commission was up for Harry Crouch, John Haffner, Ravi Mallela and Karen

Reed. They were interviewed by the Council and asked to respond to six questions, as were the first-time applicants. The questions had to do with motivation, qualifications, position on environmental issues, tolerance for opposing views and listening skills, availability to serve and perception of the main issues the town would face in the future in the area of Parks and Recreation.

The Town Council expressed appreciation for the large number of highly qualified applicants who sought to serve. "It was a competitive process with a limited number of openings. As a result, some good people who had made a positive impression on the Council could not be appointed," said Council Member Dave Trotter. At the conclusion of the Council meeting,

Town Manager Mike Segrest said it would be appropriate for individual council members to contact applicants to informally encourage them to reapply when new openings come up next year.

The Council also decided to reappoint Commissioner Bruce Whitley to the Planning Commission for a fourth term, even though the usual maximum number of appointments is three. "An attorney with land use experience is valuable, based on my experience as a planning commissioner," said Council Member Mike Metcalf, "the slate of applicants for the Planning Commission does not have an attorney and Bruce leaving would leave the commission without that expertise." Planning Director Lori Salamack confirmed that the Council

could decide to invite him to serve for a 4th term if they found it to be beneficial to the town.

Commissioners Russell Driver and Stacia Levenfeld were reappointed as well. The Council chose Tom Richards to fill the fourth vacant seat. Richards, a father of two young children, presented himself as knowledgeable about land use through family experience. He declared a desire to protect open space, keep Moraga beautiful, but still support some development.

The Traffic Safety Advisory Committee's (TSAC) call for volunteers was not as fruitful; the Council was unable to fill all of the vacant seats. Metcalf wondered if it was time to disband it, but Council Member Howard Harpham argued it is a valuable committee. "There are still many neighborhood groups that would like to work with TSAC to resolve traffic issues," said Public Works Director and Town Engineer Jill Mercurio, who serves as the staff person on that committee, "Over the past two years the projects that came in front of us did not lead to actions because of lack of support by adjacent neighbors, that may have created a feeling of uselessness, when in fact the projects simply take longer to mature." The open positions on TSAC will be re-advertised; interested residents of Moraga are encouraged to apply.

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Pruning Pear Trees

Connecting with the roots of agricultural Moraga

By Sophie Braccini

On the morning of February 13th, volunteers gathered with their tools at the corner of

Canyon and Camino Pablo, on land belonging to the Moraga School District, to help in the pruning of the pear orchard. Pear trees were planted in Moraga around 1900 as part of The Moraga Company Ranch. According to the history book, Moraga's Pride, "The Moraga Ranch boasted 100 acres in walnuts and 38 orchards in pears, apples, apricots and plums. At one time, the Moraga Company conducted the largest pear production operation under one management in the world."

Moraga's pears are no longer a commercial product, but many 100-year old trees are still around and thanks to the efforts of the Moraga Park Foundation (MPF), which takes care of them, some are producing hundreds of pounds of fruit each year that is given to local food banks.

The fact that most of the remaining pear orchards were left unkempt, and not producing anything except small and unpalatable fruit, struck Moraga residents Tom and Stephanie Smith who had been active in instituting the Moraga Pear Festival. They contacted the school district and received permission to prune the trees that grew on district land. When the Smiths left town in 2003, their mission was taken over by MPF. "The result of the pruning has been phenomenal," says MPF President Chuck Treat, "trees have been producing more fruit each year and last year we gave a record 16,000 pounds of pears to the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano.

The Bartlett pears that comprise the orchard do not require any watering and never see an ounce of chemical products. "In other parts of the country Bartlett trees need



Jonathan Rowland (left) and Ben Magidson, students from the Leadership class at JM, help with the pruning process. Photo Sophie Braccini

cross pollination, but in our area, they are self fertile, something to do with the climate and the soil," says Lawrence Bennett, a Moraga resident and landscape contractor. Pruning is all they require. "The operation is quite simple," adds Bennett, "what we do is cut out the suckers that grow around the trunk, and remove the dead or crowded branches."

Dead wood is quite easy to spot because it does not bear buds; crowding means that the volunteers are asked to remove branches that are too close or crossing each other. The proper way to prune is to cut the branch close to the trunk, leaving about 1/8 of an inch in order not to scar the bark of the trunk. At the base of the tree, the suckers were cut at ground level. Every year it takes about four hours to complete the work. When done, a large stack of cuttings is piled on the school's

property.

"We add our own cuttings to the pile and then hire a contractor to chip it and take it away," explains Rick Schafer, the Superintendent of the Moraga School District, who adds that the district is happy to see MPF taking charge of both pruning and harvesting. "We are not in the farming business, and without the Foundation the pears would go to waste," says Schafer, "MPF gets the insurance and they provide the equipment; this works very well for us." As to how long this will continue, the Superintendent remains elusive. "The Governing Board has chosen not to sell the property at this time," says Schafer, "it is too small to put in a sports field, the way it is laid out it is not optimal, and only 2.2 acre out of 3 are usable because of the creek." However, the School Board may one day have a use for that land.

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Dogs at Rancho Laguna Park Still have Many Happy Days Ahead

By Sophie Braccini



Orinda Senior Village resident Kay Biondo came in support of keeping Rancho Laguna's off-leash hours. Photo Sophie Braccini

The auditorium at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School hadn't seen such an outpouring of emotion and packed seating for a Moraga Town Council meeting since the heady days of the speed bump controversy. The house was packed on February 10th and the public endured the rigors of government proceedings as they waited for their chance to give public testimony on the off-leash future of Rancho Laguna Park. The issue finally came up at 9:30 p.m., and most of the residents stayed past midnight to hear the Council not decide anything regarding the park, but to order more study for a dedicated dog park.

37 residents took a stand on the 10th, 30 Moraga residents, five folks from Orinda and two from Lafayette; about 90% of them in support of off-leash activities at the park. It was the publicly advertised

objective of the Council to decide what kind of physical barrier should be created at the park to separate off-leash dogs from other types of users. The staff report presented the alternatives: Plan A would fence in the play and picnic areas leaving the field open to off-leash dogs before 9 a.m. and starting again one hour before dusk; Plan B would create a fenced dog park on the north side of the park, and not allow dogs on the grass area. Staff estimated the cost of plan A at between \$74,000 and \$96,250, and of plan B between \$114,900 and \$142,300; the restoration of the field would cost an additional \$179,300.

While most of the pro-dog speakers supported option A, many asked that the Town do nothing at all since the situation was satisfactory as is, and either plan would cost a significant amount of money. "What the problems are we are try-

ing to solve?" asked Moraga resident Luis Salvago-Toledo, "this place brings so much happiness to so many people without cost to the community."

The dog owners then tackled what had been the Council's prominent concern: the Town's liability in case of an accident. Frank Stevens, a lawyer from Stevens, Drummond and Gifford in Walnut Creek, addressed municipal liability for off-leash dogs. He stated that the dog owner is strictly liable for injuries and damages caused by his/her dog while municipalities in the area have never been sued over residents' dogs' injuries or damage.

The Town's attorney, James Atencio responded, "Whether or not a physical barrier is installed to separate users, the Town would still be exposed to liability." Stevens added that municipalities could purchase relatively inexpensive insurance to cover such risks.

With the presentation of Moraga resident Bob Reynolds the debate shifted focus. "The discussion should not stop at alternative A or B," said Reynolds, "mixed use is a bad idea, and those two options are polarizing the population." Reynolds recommended that the Town look at other properties it owns where a dedicated dog park could be established. "The back-40 at the Commons is underutilized and it has good access," he said, referring to the north-east portion of the park, "and there is another piece of land that could be suitable as well; it is located along Saint Mary's road, across from the College."

Mayor Ken Chew supported that proposal and added that he didn't like either Plan A or B because both were expensive and would not resolve the problems at the park. "What we need is for dog owners to formalize an association or club that

would take responsibility for the off-leash hour usage," said Chew, "like that, staff would have an interlocutor should a problem arise."

The Council voted unanimously to instruct staff to study other possible locations for a dedicated dog park. Staff was not given a specific deadline by which it must present a preliminary report. The previously established temporary off-leash hours will stand in the meantime.

From April 1 to September 30, dogs are allowed off-leash from park opening to 9:00 a.m. and from 6 p.m. to park closing; from October 1 to March 31 during the same morning hours and in the afternoon from 4:00 p.m. to park closing.

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Rancho Laguna Park Survey Results
From September to November 2009, 475 surveys were completed regarding the use of Rancho Laguna Park. The results have since been discussed in commission meetings. Some of the answers include:
What do you like best about the park? 65% - Natural setting; 40% - Quiet; 32% - off-leash
What do you like least in the park? 46% - off-leash; 39% - Soggy grass; 12% - team sports
What facilities would cause you to visit more often? 24% - better lawn; 21% - fenced dog area; 20% - playground
The survey results have been challenged by off-leash supporters on the grounds that the questions were confusing and the survey was not conducted in a scientifically sound manner that did not use representative sampling techniques.

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Special Tri-Agency Meeting with MOFD and Town of Moraga
Wednesday, March 3, 7:00 pm
Garden Room, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way, Orinda

Planning Commission Tuesday, February 23, 8:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

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

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Mayor McCormick—Tough Road Ahead

By Andrea A. Firth



Mayor Tom McCormick

Photo Tod Fierner

"It was the best of times. It was the worst of times," stated Mayor Tom McCormick as he addressed over 150 people at the annual Mayor's Luncheon jointly sponsored by Orinda Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce. McCormick used the Charles Dickens' quote to characterize the current state of affairs in Orinda, which has some of the best schools in the State and resilient property values despite the economic downturn (the best of times) while it also carries the distinction of having some of the worst roads in the Bay Area and a flagging downtown commercial district (the worst of times). "We have many challenges to make Orinda an even better place to live, but they are not insurmountable," said McCormick.

Before launching into his plans for Orinda in 2010, McCormick first acknowledged the commitment and good work of the City staff, which has been faced with a 4% pay cut and a cap on benefits due to the City's dwindling revenues. He also recognized the hard work of his fellow Council members, and thanked his parents for encouraging him to pursue public service. McCormick's parents have both served as elected officials; his mother has served on the Dublin City Council.

McCormick covered a number of topics related to the City's operations, from the healthy volunteer ethic, to community safety issues and plans for the 25th anniversary of the City's incorpora-

tion, but the City's limited budget dollars and significant infrastructure needs dominated his speech. "Believe it or not, Orinda government is considered a poor government [as compared to other cities]," stated the Mayor. "We have limited dollars to spend on road and infrastructure repairs and other necessary services."

While not advocating a wholesale change in the way Orinda operates, McCormick emphasized the need to increase the City's revenues. "Our revenue is not going up," said McCormick. He explained that only 7% of the property tax generated in Orinda actually finds its way to the City budget. Orinda receives approximately \$5 million in property tax revenue, its single

largest source of operating revenue, which represents 45% of the City's \$11 million annual budget.

The short-term solution to increasing revenues, raising taxes, will not be pursued at this time according to the Mayor. He focused on longer-term solutions to increasing the City's revenues including the creation of a user-friendly planning process and the revitalization of the downtown district—initiatives that have been integral to his first three years on the Council.

"A revitalized downtown will generate more revenue for the City," stated McCormick. He outlined the recommendations of the City's Planning Process Review Task Force, which has already streamlined the process for residential remodeling and development. He advocated for allowing the downtown building height to increase to 55 feet to allow for retail on the first floor and housing on the top three floors. He shared architectural renderings by Orinda resident Peter Hasselman that depicted a new vision for Orinda's downtown. While he acknowledged that the City and the Council have not sanctioned these plans, McCormick sees opportunity in the ideas.

"You live in a community that really cares," stated McCormick on a positive note. "The great thing about Orinda is that the residents are smart, well educated, involved, and willing to share their opinions."

Orinda Police Chief French to Retire

By Andrea A. Firth



Chief Bill French in his office

Photo Tod Fierner

After almost 26 years with the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office and serving the last three years as the Chief of Police in Orinda, Bill French is preparing to retire. French's last day on the job

will be March 30th. French will be departing as the cities of Orinda and Lafayette evaluate potential new police service delivery options in the wake of the rising costs associated with the contracts they main-

tain with the Sheriff's Office. "I know the community is concerned about the cost of police and fire service," notes French, but he adds, "The product the Sheriff's Office provides the community is second to none. I hope the relationship continues."

In his tenure as Orinda's top cop, French has focused on crime, particularly burglary, identity theft, and robbery, and on curbing underage alcohol use. French and the 14 officers and two city staff that he commands have had to manage a couple of crime sprees in the city over the past few years. In the summer and early fall of 2008, French's team worked with the police in Lafayette and the County Sheriff's department to break up a ring of thieves that had committed up to ten burglaries a month in Orinda during the height of their crime

spree. "We were very active and worked well with east and central county departments to stop this group," says French noting that Orinda typically experiences four or less burglaries a month, many of which occur at construction sites. "I also knew coming in there was going to be a focus on teen alcohol use. It was and remains a priority for the department," says French. "Our policy is zero tolerance."

City Manager Janet Keeter anticipates that Chief French's replacement will be on board before he departs at the end of March. "The Sheriff's office has provided me with four qualified candidates," states Keeter, "I am putting together an interview process that will include a number of oral boards consisting of community partners and professional technical individuals."

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Orindans Say No Tax for New Roads

By Andrea A. Firth

A convincing majority of Orinda voters believe that the City's road conditions are among the worst in the Bay Area and that the aged storm drain system is simultaneously collapsing beneath the roads. However, a much less convincing number of voters support new taxes to fix the City's infrastructure problems.

At their February 2nd meeting, the City Council reviewed the results of a public opinion poll of 400 residents who were surveyed to assess their support of ballot measures to finance infrastructure improvements. Although 52% of those polled would likely support an infrastructure bond, the positive responses fell far short of the 2/3 super-majority required to carry the measure. "Given the financial situation of our community, the general obligation bond is not an option," stated Council Member Steve Glazer who noted that polling numbers were higher when the City previously placed infrastructure bond measures on the ballot. In addition, Orindans were starkly opposed to the idea of a \$300 parcel tax to fund road and storm drain repairs with 60% of those surveyed rejecting this approach.

In fact there was no funding mechanism or tax that seemed sufficiently palatable to the residents surveyed to support even a simple

majority for an infrastructure measure. Increasing the real property transfer tax, increasing the local sales tax, and establishing a utility users tax—all measures that require a simple majority for approval—looked unlikely to pass if presented to voters. Slightly less than 50% of surveyed voters supported increasing the real property transfer tax. [This tax would also necessitate that Orinda switch from a general law to an independent charter city, which is an option the City Council has begun to weigh. Lafayette recently polled residents regarding their support of the charter city move, and Orinda's Council plans to look to those results for guidance.] Forty-six percent of those surveyed agreed with increasing the local sales tax by ¼ cent to support infrastructure. Establishing a utility usage tax on water, gas, electric, cable, and phone service was the toughest sell with only 24% of respondents supporting the concept.

With declining revenues and a projected deficit for the upcoming budget year, the poll also asked residents about their support of new taxes to fund city services. Over half, 52% of those polled, would support a \$53 annual parcel tax for this use, but again this was far short of the required 2/3 majority needed to carry the measure. The ¼ cent sales tax, which needs

a simple majority to pass, garnered the support of 53% of residents polled. At current sales levels this tax increase would yield \$370,000 annually; while it would have minimal impact on the City's multi-million dollar infrastructure problem, the Council did feel this could help bridge the City budget's revenue gap. However, Council member Glazer voiced concern that with the margin presented it would take a big effort to push the ¼ cent sales tax through. "I guess my concern is having someone willing to step forward to run a campaign [for the sales tax]," added Vice Mayor Victoria Smith noting that she did not see any obvious interest group to take charge.

Regarding the public's satisfaction with how the City is doing its job, the poll results were more positive. Seventy eight percent of those polled felt the City was doing an average or better job at taking care of business and providing basic services. The Library, the Orinda Union School District (K through 8th grade), and the police department all received approval ratings of 80% or more, and 70% of respondents approved of the Moraga Orinda Fire District's performance. The City Council held its own with 60% of respondents strongly or somewhat agreeing of their performance, which was a 4% bump over poll results from 2008.

Orinda Turns 25—Celebration Plans in the Works

By Andrea A. Firth

July 1st, 2010 marks the 25th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Orinda, and the City has a long list of events and activities planned to commemorate the event throughout the year (see sidebar). The July 4th parade, which was established about the same time that the City incorporated, will be a focal point for the celebration. Mark Roberts, President of the Orinda Association, and event chairwoman Chris Laszcz-Davis, are busy recruiting volunteers for a fun-filled day of food and music in conjunction with the parade.

Orinda was an unincorporated thriving community for decades, but in the summer of 1985 the residents of the area moved to become a city to take control of health and safety issues. The citizens voted for incorporation to obtain better emergency service coverage and to gain greater control over the planning process, public works, and police services. Now in its 25th year as a city, people are ready to take part in the valued traditions like the parade along with a few special events to mark the occasion.

"Many people may not realize how much the City is involved with supporting community events like the July 4th parade festivities," states City Council Member Sue Severson. "The City covers things like insurance costs, provides police

support, and other financial support," she adds, but with the decline in revenues the City was forced to eliminate its financial support of the events. Severson spearheaded an effort last spring to create fundraising events to support the Orinda Community Fund, which in turn supports community events, the Art in Public Places program, and Orinda Beautification programs, among other things. This effort kicked off with a Kids Triathlon at Miramonte High School last fall, which raised about \$8,000.

Severson is working on two fundraisers associated with Orinda's 25th anniversary. There will be a celebrity golf tournament held at the Orinda Country Club on July 26th. The theme of the outing is "Celebrate Everyday Heroes." Captain C.B. "Sully" Sullenberger,

a Danville resident and the U.S. Airways pilot who made an amazing emergency landing in the Hudson River saving the lives of all 155 people onboard, will serve as honorary chair for the event. There are 120 spots available for the golf tournament, and a dinner dance will be held the evening prior. Along with the Community Fund proceeds will be donated to Boys and Girls Clubs of the Bay Area and the Contra Costa County and Alameda Food Banks. Severson's crew of volunteers has also planned the Silver Ball, an evening of food, wine, art, and music set for October 2nd, again at the Orinda Country Club. Juried artworks from Bay Area artists will be on display and up for auction. For more information about the silver Ball go to <http://orindasilverball.com>.

City Events for Orinda's 25th*

- Time capsule sealing and burial
- Birthday cake in the Community Park (7/29/10)
- Council Proclamation (6/15/10)
- Student writing contest (Spring 2010)
- Ten Dance with a 1980's theme
- Family movie night
- Historical retrospective
- Gallery of Council portraits
- Anniversary give-aways

*City events are proposed; dates are to be confirmed.

To get involved go to: <http://www.orindaassociation.org/>

The Fiery Furnace at Orinda Books

Submitted by Bobbie Dodson

In 1887, to get from Detroit, Michigan to Teheran, Persia was a daunting journey even for eighteen year old Louisa Jordan Merriweather. Thus begins the book, "The Fiery Furnace: Has Teheran Changed Much in 100 Years?" written by Orindan Margaret Wood Little. A book signing for this new novel will take place at the Orinda Book Store, 276 Village Square in Orinda at 4:00 p.m. on February 25.

Little says she chose this setting for her story as her grandfather started the Presbyterian Mission in

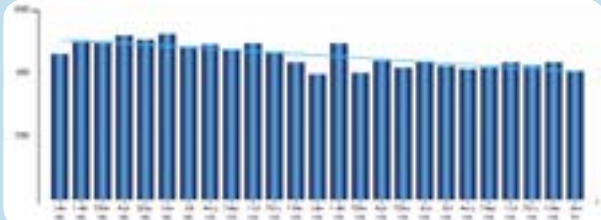
Teheran and served as its head for several years. "Born in Teheran, my mother lived there until she was 12 years old. My siblings and I were intrigued by the stories she told about her life in this far away land. I also had letters my grandfather wrote. Strangely enough, he was a good friend of the Shah."

With this firsthand material, as well as hours spent in research, Little weaves a story of romance with factual information about life in the late 19th century in Persia, which is now known as Iran. Her title poses

the question, "Has Teheran changed much in the last 100 years?" and she wonders what your answer will be.

Margaret Little has been writing for 20 years. Her first published book was Strawberry Stars. She says "I write because I enjoy it, and to re-write several times is even more fun." Currently she is working on "Candy and Jazz," which covers the beginning of the Jazz era. Little has lived in Orinda with her husband, Dr. Jim Little, since 1964, where they raised three sons.

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Editor:

I am family therapist in Moraga. I have been hearing a lot from teens I treat about their own concerns regarding peers or even younger Jr. High kids posting on Facebook or texting pictures of themselves in various states of undress. "Sexting", sexual messages and photos, has become a very common behavior in our local area, much to my concern. As we know, once information is let loose onto the Internet, there is no way of controlling where it ends up and for how long. The technology component is a complicating factor of another larger issue, I believe. The world went through a giant upheaval during the sexual revolution and the use of shame as a control mechanism was no longer acceptable. In many cases at the present time, nothing is being taught about self-respect as a motivator of behavior. Long-term thinking has never been a strong suite of adolescents. They are surrounded by images and messages that encourage doing anything that gets attention, the more sexual the better. If asked, I doubt any would be pleased to be remembered as the girl (or boy) whose nude photos were shared by everyone due to an impulsive gesture.

I believe we must get to know our children better so that we can have more open discussions about the repercussions of actions, especially those that become public. Adolescence is a time of pushing the envelope and taking certain risks. There needs to be a better understanding about implied messages. If a girl will share these kinds of private images or engage in aggressive sexual messaging what behaviors might be expected to go along with that kind of thinking? Often, these connections don't seem to be made and it is only after exposure to public shaming or sexual aggression that the real understanding comes. Parents need to be involved in exploring those risks with their kids while instilling a sense of self-pride that goes beyond academics and sports and nurtures their children through the rest of their lives.

Cynthia Brody
Moraga

Editor:

"There go the people. I must follow them, for I am their leader." -- French politician Alexandre Ledru-Rollin

What delicious irony! February--Global Population Speak Out Month with over 250 population experts from 26 nations speaking out on the penalties of perpetual population growth--and we have a photo of 14 Lamorinda leaders shoveling sand and saying, "Altogether now . . . let's bury our heads!" By all means, let's build a fourth bore . . . particularly when our local Congressmen can con 300 million Americans who can't spell "Caldecott" into helping pay for it. Of course we all know their \$197 million contribution will turn out to be only a downpayment as actual costs soar over the bore. Meanwhile, east Contra Costa's agricultural land is paved over for more homes and roads and industrial centers. Makes sense: Reduce food production while increasing food consumption.

Is there any hope for America? For California? For Contra Costa? Not much . . . As someone familiar with municipal governments asked me years ago, "Have you ever met a mayor who wanted to say, 'My city's population is stable and sustainable?'" To find hope one has to leave the U.S. Some of Great Britain's environmentalists are pointing out England is moving toward the population density of Bangladesh. And in Australia, some environmentalists are suggesting citizens intentionally waste water in hopes of convincing their politicians to take their heads out of their drought-driven sands and stop encouraging more births and more immigrants.

While Lamorinda residents spend 24 to travel 4 (minutes and miles) our smiling leaders shovel sand in celebration of a fourth bore for '24.' What a snore!

"The obscure takes time to see, but the obvious takes longer." -- Edward R. Murrow

Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

Editor:

When did wheat, something human beings have been consuming for over 10,000 years, turn into cancer causing poison? Why are you promoting a radical viewpoint about health and nutrition. What kind of doctor is Theresa Tsingis? I was appalled after reading Part 2 of the "Bread-Staff of Life, or Slice of Illness". I have a Bachelors Degree in biology, and have taken immunology classes, and take offense to her article. How the article is written she is implying almost all auto-immune disorders are caused by eating wheat. She also lists diabetes as an autoimmune disorder, which it is not. If it were that easy then by simply ceasing the consumption of wheat we can cure all auto immune disorders.

Also, she states that very small amounts of wheat can cause a reaction. The very small amount she is referencing is the amount of wheat that a person who

has celiac disease can eat before they get a reaction. She is implying this small amount will cause a person with "wheat allergies" to get a reaction. I have meet people who have celiac disease. As children they were very skinny because eating wheat stopped their ability to absorb nutrients from food, and when they eat wheat they get very sick. People with celiac disease have real disease, the rest of us do not.

Is there scientific proof of wheat allergies? What percent of the population has them? She even states in her article there isn't any way to test for them. That is because they don't exist.

Did you see the latest on Autism? Turns out the scientist who first linked Autism and vaccines has had his medical license removed, his research rescinded, and was trying to sell a competing vaccine to the one he was trying to get off the market. After the third installment of the series it turns out Dr. Tsingis is trying to open a store to sell her wheat free goods. Trying to scare people into thinking they have wheat allergies to help her open a bakery seems disingenuous at best.

I think you as a journalist have to raise the bar higher. Putting out articles like these with half truths confuse people with no scientific background, who can not see the inaccuracies in them.

Erik Owens
Orinda

Editor:

Less than a year has passed since the Acalanes School District hit local homeowners with conversion of a 2005 existing \$189 tax, to a "forever tax". Now, it's back again for a new tax. This time, it's blaming loss of State subventions for need to seek added revenues.

Regrettably, there seems inadequate District awareness that there is a simple resolution for this perceived revenue deficiency -- just revert to levels of teacher expenses which prevailed prior to the Teachers Union-owned State Legislature, imposing its class size reduction dictates...and thereby, heavily increasing local teaching personnel costs.

This K-2 class size reduction to a 15-20 student/classrange, from 25-30 (starting from 30+ in 1960), has caused major increases in class room and associated costs (including need for more classroom space, etc.). It also brought into the teacher population, large numbers of under-qualified teachers. Published CATO Institute studies reveal that 72% of such reductions have no impact on "accomplishment", a 13% degradation on same -- and, this largely, because as many as half of "subject teachers" now lack minors or majors in such subjects.

During times of relative prosperity, these "size" costs have been manageable to a degree...especially, since in the same time frames, the Legislature raised mandated education shares of overall State revenues to 40%+ (with provision for a +5% increase in years when State revenues decline). According to a State budget website data, that share is now up to 57%. And, since teacher unionization has been growing since the '60s, teacher costs have risen significantly - but, without improved "productivity" ...by some studies, even a few percent drop.

Clearly, despite District work now underway in reducing teacher levels, it needs to respond to its revenue shortage in the same fashion any other enterprise whose costs are mainly work force headcount - and, is losing revenues. So, should Acalanes act the same way...i.e., reduce staffing to levels which revenues will support. This particularly, should not result in underfunding non-classroom functions such as safety or vital maintenance services.

There too is reason to again remind, that the District's over all money management needs some "re-visiting". As noted in these pages last year, the district has engaged in several very costly "non-voted upon" consultant-driven bond re-financings. The result of which enabled the brokers and advisers to rake in 41% of the total overall re-fi proceeds. See Bloomberg Markets Magazine October 2009 issue, re the real Acalanes story <www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=email_en&is=aq6uoNsCFpl>.

Attorney General Brown also claims such actions are illegal!

In closing, nothing should be inferred here as criticism of teachers -- only of their unions and how they have downgraded a once highly honored profession - one, a historically respected/admired "community of professionals" ...doctors, lawyers, engineers, ministers, etc.. And now, downgraded to the equivalent of faceless "toilers" - just common denominator names on a payroll, where base pay is the same, regardless of differences in quality of effort or student outcome.

Finally -- this writer is a lifelong "education fan" - son of a school teacher mother, and a recipient of a superb education in one of those long ago CA classes of 30 to 40 students.

Donald Lively
Lafayette

Life in LAMORINDA

Choreographing "The Importance of Being Earnest"

By Sophie Braccini



(L-R) Christopher Kristant (Algernon), Casi Maggio (Cecily), Sally Clawson (Gwendolen), Ryan O'Donnell (Jack)

Town Hall Theater will present Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest," from February 25th through March 27th. "We chose this play in part because it's such a well-known and well-loved piece of theater," said Artistic Director Clive Worsley, "Many people consider it one of the greatest comedies ever written. There is something timeless and always resonant in this delightful story. And I could think of no one better suited to direct this play than the wonderful Susannah Martin."

Susannah Martin, a young Bay Area director, is known for not being afraid to shake up the classics. For example, in her recent production of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's "The Threepenny Opera," for the Shotgun Players in Berkeley, she set the Victorian era story in punk era America. She was not quite so radical with "The Importance of Being Earnest." Although she

moved the action from the Victorian era, as it was written and set, it was only by a few years; Martin's production takes place in 1925. "The play contains elements of modernism in the characters and their behavior," said Martin during rehearsals, "Wilde was ahead of his time, moving the action forward in time reveals it."

Situating the play after the First World War allows the director to show other aspects that she sees in the play. "This is a very light play, Wilde called it a 'trifle,' but there are harder truths underneath," says Martin, "In the play, the characters discover who they really are. They search for their real identity beyond the social conventions, and finally find it."

Martin found strong elements of modernism in the behavior of the young ladies of the play who, according to her, lead the men and break expectations. "The 20's was a

Photo courtesy Town Hall Theater time in England when women got the right to vote (if they were over 30 and married), where the dresses and hair got shorter and traditional roles shifted," says the Director, "Gwendolen and Cecily's personalities and the actions they take in the play completely fit that bill. In fact, Wilde was so ahead of his time that I was very surprised to learn that he died in 1900."

During rehearsal, Martin uses physical improvisation techniques that allow the actors to explore the deeper feelings of the characters. One scene depicts the first meeting of the two young ladies of the play, and how they shortly discover that they are both engaged to Earnest (only to find out later that it is not the same person). Martin asked the two actresses to play "hats off," miming and improvising the shifting emotions in a quasi-dance, the rising of their aggressiveness, and their fight. Later, the two women

play the same scene "with the lid on," now back to the contained gestures proper for their society and time, but still carrying and expressing the emotions that were displayed in the "danced" version.

"I give the actors a very detailed list of what I want to see in every beat (a small section of the text that Martin identifies for its coherent set of emotions), then I ask them to choreograph it, in their vocal or physical performances. I give them the structure, they choose how to express it, and we crack the nut of the play together." That's the way Martin and her cast respect the classics, by leaving no stone or pebble unturned.

"She brings such an incredibly theatrical eye to everything she works on, and is able to bring a story to life through her visionary and ensemble-driven approach to her actors," comments Worsley.

At the same time she directs the adult cast, Martin asks the shadow cast to be present. These teen actors, who work as backstage crew, will have two presentations of their own, on March 14th at 7:00 p.m. and the 21st at 2:00 p.m. "The high school students are wonderful to have around," says Martin, "Adult actors can do things the younger ones can't, but the teens sometimes have a higher willingness to try and take risks, they are not afraid to fail; the adult actors can learn from their fearlessness."

The Importance of Being Earnest runs Feb. 25th - March 27. It is rated "PG" and is about two hours long. For tickets contact the Town Hall Theatre Box Office at (925) 283-1557, or purchase online at www.TownHallTheatre.com.



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Susannah Martin talks to the cast during rehearsal

Photo Sophie Braccini

MOFD, FAIR Meet To Discuss Fire Service

By Lucy Amaral

Although it was obvious that the two sides were not going to easily agree on what to do about the fire district's financials, the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) and a citizen's group, Fire and Infrastructure Renewal (FAIR), met on February 3rd at a MOFD Board work session to start the conversation.

Nearly 100 people packed the Fellowship Hall of the Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church to hear representatives of FAIR offer their ideas to dissolve MOFD, then contract with the Contra Costa Fire Protection District (ConFire) and American Medical Response (AMR) to provide fire and emergency services to the City of Orinda. According to FAIR, this new arrangement would save Orinda millions in tax dollars, which could be redirected back to the city to be used for infrastructure improvements.

The MOFD Board had submitted 30 questions to the citizens group for their review. Most of the questions dealt with how FAIR arrived at the lowered costs. During the meeting, all but two questions had been pre-answered. The two questions, according to FAIR member, Steve Cohn, were of key concern to FAIR as they felt one was a "trick" question challenging FAIR's assurance that service levels would not degrade, and the other question contested FAIR's statement that local control would increase under FAIR's proposal. Those questions

were clarified and debated but seemingly not answered to any side's satisfaction.

Many of the projections offered by FAIR were, by their own admission, estimates, and during the presentation, MOFD board members requested contacts and additional data to use for verification. There were moments of contention on both sides of the aisle, however for the most part, civility maintained its place.

MOFD focused a portion of their questions on the contract options for American Medical Response, a medical transport company that would provide ambulance service to Orinda if MOFD were to be dissolved. Currently, MOFD has two ambulances, one stationed in Moraga and one stationed in Orinda. The Board's concern included response time, staffing and asked about the possibility of having transport housed in Orinda. FAIR's response was that any such details would need to be worked out in a contract between Orinda and AMR.

The Board then asked Manuel Navarro, vice president of EMS development for AMR to speak. Navarro said that currently, MOFD has authority over its emergency medical services. He added that if the City of Orinda breaks away and contract with ConFire, the AMR must contract through ConFire, not the city, therefore leaving it up to ConFire to determine any service levels.

During the public comment section of the evening a new citizen's group, OrindaCARES (Citizens Against Reducing Emergency Services), announced its formation in support of MOFD. Speakers supporting MOFD outnumbered those wishing to dissolve the district by more than 4 to 1, including pro-MOFD comments from Moraga Police Chief Robert Priebe and Orinda School Board President Riki Sorenson. Those speaking in favor of dissolving MOFD focused on the examination of how current funding is used and how that might be changed.

Board President, Frank Sperling, said the meeting was productive. "It's a first step in the MOFD Board of Director's quest to fully understand the details of this group's proposal," he said.

The Board requested Director John Wyro begin the vetting process and validating FAIR's information. Wyro said he will report his progress at the Board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, February 17.


Cohn said he hopes now that Moraga, Orinda and MOFD will look into FAIR's proposal further and that this meeting was a necessary step.

"We think we were asked good questions and we believe we answered them well," said Cohn. "We believe we have done our homework and that our responses reflected that."

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How it Works—The Local Civic Process School Finance

By Andrea A. Firth

Lamorinda's public schools are grappling with the impact of significant reductions in State funding. The *How it Works* series shifts gears to take a look at how our public schools are financed.

"Schools in Lamorinda are among the lowest funded in the State," states Nancy Vandell, Vice President of Education and Legislation for the 32nd District PTA. This seems incongruent with the high education levels of adult residents, the high property values of the homes, and the emphasis placed on education in these communities. Although Lamorinda's public schools have historically been quite successful at bridging the State funding gap, cuts to education funding over the past three years have caused local school districts to eliminate people and programs.

To the most involved parent

or education savvy individual, school finance in California is complex and convoluted. This article will provide an overview of some of the basics of the process.

Revenue Limits: Prior to 1972, local public schools were funded in large part by local property taxes. This created a disparity in funding among districts statewide that was deemed unconstitutional (Serrano vs. Priest is the now landmark case.) In response, the legislature pooled local property taxes to fund all public schools in the State.

Revenue limits, the amount the State provides a school district, were established based on the per pupil spending in a district at that time. Lamorinda schools were on the low end of the spending scale, so going forward they received less State education dollars as compared to many other schools. Over time, there has been some equalization of State funding to school districts. At this point, Lamorinda schools annually receive \$25 to \$50 per student, less than 90% of the state average according to Vandell. State education funding in Lamorinda is, at the minimum, 10% less than the State average.

Proposition 98: A full understanding of all the complexities of the ballot initiative, which was passed in 1988, eludes most. Essentially, Proposition 98 committed

the State to spending 40% of the general fund on K through 14 schools. When the State's revenues go up, schools benefit; as revenues decline, schools receive less funding.

Funding Sources: Typically in California, about 60% of school revenues come from the State (mainly income and sales tax revenue), about 23% are from local property taxes, and federal funds contribute about 10%. The State lottery contributes less than 2% to school funding statewide. The lottery's annual contribution to Contra Costa County represents 1.3% of the funding public schools receive. Local and miscellaneous sources, including parcel taxes and contributions from foundations and individuals, comprise the rest. The specific distribution of funding sources in Lamorinda schools may differ; each district has its own combination of federal, state, and local sources.

Local Revenue: Around 1986, local jurisdictions were given the power to enact local taxes—at a flat rate per parcel—for any purpose designated on the ballot. The bar for passage of the parcel tax was set high at a 2/3 threshold. All of the public school districts in Lamorinda's K through 12 schools have a parcel tax that contributes to their revenue stream.

School facilities bonds can

also be passed in a local election. These bond measures can only be used for improving the school facilities (e.g., fixing the roof, resurfacing the pool, upgrading the technology infrastructure), and the amount per taxpayer varies depending upon the assessed value of his/her property.

With the passage of Proposition 39 in 2000, the voter threshold for facilities bonds was reduced to 55%. In November of 2008, local voters passed Measure E, a \$93 million facilities bond for the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) earmarked for infrastructure projects at the District's four traditional high schools, renovations and expansions at the Adult Education Center, and a 10-year technology fund.

Expenses: The large majority of school district expenses are related to the salaries and benefits of the classified employees, teachers, other certificated staff, and administrators. For the AUHSD, 86% of the budget goes toward these staffing expenses.

There is much more to school finance in California. Subsequent segments of the *How it Works* series will work to provide further information on the complexities of this process. Next up in the *How it Works* series will be a guide to LAFCOs (local agency formation commissions).



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AUHSD Proposes Parcel Tax

... continued from page 1



Joni Avery and Susie Epstein, co-chairs of the tax campaign Photo Angela LaScala-Gruenewald

Speakers included tax campaign organizers, the President of the Teacher's Union and students from Acalanes High School's Save Our Schools (SOS) Club. Joni Avery, co-chair of the tax campaign, opened the hearing by voicing her concerns regarding the amount of the parcel tax, noting that the tax must be sufficient to offset the costs of financing a proper campaign but not so high as to seem unreasonable and fail to garner the required two-thirds supermajority of votes needed for approval. The Board agreed on the final amount of \$112 which is supported by survey results and voter trend analysis. Avery hopes community residents, especially those without children who are swing voters, will realize that passing a parcel tax to maintain the quality of the district's schools

benefits everyone and keeps property values high.

SOS representative Michaela Tarpey also addressed the Board and pledged student support. "Our main goal is to help pass the parcel tax," she declared. Teachers Union President Jen Nickl assured the Board that teachers, counselors, librarians and nurses will be an "active and involved group... we will be a very authentic voice talking about how critically central this [tax] is going to be for our schools."

Board Clerk Tom Mulvaney warned that this tax will not ultimately save the district if deep cuts in educational spending continue to be made by the state. He urged the community to work together to preserve AUHSD's status as the best high school district in California.

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The Music of Spring

By Lou Fancher



Olivia Da Silva and Holly Sass at a rehearsal

Photo Doug Kohen

The annual musicals at Lamorinda's three high schools are as different as the snowflakes that fell in a rare burst of winter on December 7th, 2009. And just like that brief blanketing of snow, (and the related snowball battles at area schools,) the musicals create an unparalleled mixture of suspense, joy, and breathless exhilaration.

David Pinkham is directing his ninth Campolindo High School production this year. At Campo, auditions are open to all grade levels, although students must be enrolled in the choral program to participate. Pinkham and three to four associates select the musical each season. "First, I see what our next crop of singers will be," he says. He then searches for variety: "Last year, we did Beauty and the Beast, with people dressed up as things they aren't, so this year, we wanted to go 180 degrees the other way." With a number of strong male voices and wanting an ensemble show, The Titanic was selected. There are two casts of the 8-10 leading roles and a total of 130 students involved in the production.

Bruce Lengacher is the Producer and Stage Director of Cinderella, the 2010 musical at Acalanes High School. The process is intensely student-driven from start to finish. "I usually pick three shows I think we can do with the talent we have," Lengacher explains. The juniors and seniors in Concert Choir—a prerequisite for participation—study the libretto, then vote. This year, the kids liked all three options, making for a tight race. "I had to recount the ballots three times!" says Lengacher. There are approximately 50 in the cast, plus 35 instrumentalists. For

choir members whose calendars are too jam packed with sports, student council, part-time jobs, not to mention hefty academic loads, Acalanes offers options. "We have student production teams so the kids can be a part of the musical without being at all the rehearsals," Lengacher explains. With a tight, two month production schedule and four rehearsals a week, it's little wonder students refer to the final week before opening night as "hell week."

Miramonte High School assigns the overall director's chair to Sarah Downs, the school's Director of Music. She selects the musical, hires the producers and directors and conducts the auditions, open to all drama and music students. Downs chose Into the Woods, with definite goals in mind. "The music is very challenging. This group of seniors, especially—I have a talented group of kids and this musical will take them to the next performance level." Once the preliminary decisions are completed, the musical becomes a student-based production. "Students learn and run the lighting, students learn and do the marketing, set construction, really, every aspect," Downs says. Miramonte's cast is this year's smallest at 32, but Downs' ultimate goal is as big as the Titanic: "[Participating] teaches them to make a commitment and follow through to achieve the end product."

Successful high school musicals, contrary to the hilarity of television's "Glee," and the Hollywood smash hit "High School Musical," are mostly the result of roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-dirty work. Expectedly, parents volunteer their time and

skills; whether it's building sets on Saturdays at Campo or tutoring in the homework room next to the theater at Miramonte. The musicals are more than just a song and a lark; they become a community event and a chance for students and their families to create lasting memories.

"I don't remember a lot about high school," Lengacher admits, "but I remember every rehearsal and every show I was in." The impact of his own high school performances keep him motivated during the long hours and late nights. Pinkham, whose two children were in past productions, also got hooked on theater through personal experience. "It's an artistic outlet for me," he says. With a nine year history, he gets an added boost from watching individual students develop: "It's so much fun to see the amazing changes and growth," he says. And, Downs, sounding serious beyond her years, speaks with candor and purpose when she says, "The musicals give the kids a different genre of music to learn. And it gives the kids the experience of working together."

Collaboration and Learning could be the title of the annual productions, if it weren't so dreary, and well, unmusical. The three high schools may fall into different patterns as they bring a musical to the stage, but there are two things they all have in common: kids are the stars, and fun performs nightly.

Lamorinda's 2010 High School Musicals
 Acalanes: *Cinderella*, March 3-6
 Campolindo: *The Titanic*, March 11-13, tickets www.campochoir.com
 Miramonte: *Into the Woods*, March 18-21 and 25-27

Live at the Orinda—Chamber Brings on the Laughs, March 5th

By Andrea A. Firth

Lamorindans who like to laugh (and who doesn't) will have the opportunity to see five well-known masters of funny at the comedy event *Live at the Orinda* to be held on Friday, March 5th at the Orinda Theater. Sponsored by the Orinda Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with Tommy T's Comedy Clubs and The Lamorinda Film & Entertainment Foundation, the night of laughter will feature comedians Ed Tracey, Larry "Bubbles" Brown, Dan St. Paul, Mark Pitta, and Johnny Steele.

"Comedy is a wonderful thing," says Rick Kattenburg, the owner of an Orinda-based architectural firm and a Chamber member. "We want this fundraiser to be uniquely different," he adds, "A lot of work has gone into the planning to make this a lot of fun." Kattenburg spearheaded the event,

which will raise funds to defray the Chamber's operational costs. Like many of Orinda's non-profit groups, City budget cuts have left the Chamber short on funds to cover events they sponsor such as the Restaurant Tour.



The evening of fun will kick off with a champagne reception at 7:00 p.m. followed by the laugh-packed performances starting at 8:00 p.m. Seating for the show will be open. According to Kattenburg, everyone will have a great view because of a live video feed projected onto the big screen above the comics during the show.

"Live at the Orinda offers fun-loving people of our East Bay communities the opportunity to share an evening of relaxing laughter while discovering all the charms of Orinda," adds Sue Breedlove, Orinda Chamber of Commerce President. "We expect this will become an annual event."

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Lamorinda's Religious Services



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Services for youth and children after worship during the 10:30am service

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8:15 a.m. Traditions Worship Service
9:15 a.m. Coffee Fellowship
9:40 a.m. Education for all ages
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Not to be missed

ART

Hearst Gallery presents Ralph Borge: A Symbolic Realist and His Circle, through March 14th. A retrospective exhibition by California College of the Arts beloved master professor of painting and drawing, Ralph Borge (1921 - 2009), including a selection of works by some of his most noted former students. The Hearst Gallery is located at Saint Mary's College, 1928 Saint Mary's Road, Moraga. The building is directly behind the Chapel. Hours: Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Suggested admission donation: \$3.

The Lafayette Gallery is pleased to



Garden by Judy Feins

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 11:00a.m. to 5:00p.m. from Tuesday through Saturday. Lafayette Gallery, located at 50 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette. Phone (925) 284-2788; www.lafayettegallery.net.

Moraga Art Gallery is presenting "Three Continents" featuring local artists showing watercolor, acrylic and oil paintings, ceramics, photography, mixed media, jewelry and glass designs through March 14. 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 Orinda Arts Council announces the 7th Annual High School Visual Arts Competition featuring 2D, 3D and photographic art. All entries will be exhibited at the Orinda Library Gallery, March 5-30. Artists' Reception and Awards Presentation, Wed., March 10, 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. Please join us for light refreshments and announcement of winners! Questions? Contact ccklevan@comcast.net.

Going once, going twice... SOLD! If you have a passion for the arts or fine wood work, then you're in luck. Campolindo art and woodshop students have joined together for an upcoming show in an effort to raise money for Haiti. Every piece at the show will be auctioned off to the highest bidder. All proceeds will go to the America Red Cross Haitian Relief Fund. The

event was organized by Campo teachers Jill Langston and Don Dupont. It will be hosted by Anthony Ruiz at Fast Frame in Lafayette on Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 27th and 28th. Where: 3571 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Lafayette When: Sat. Feb. 27 -viewing and bidding 10:00a.m.-6:00p.m. Sun. Feb. 28; -reception 11:00a.m.-4:00p.m. Questions? Contact jlangston@acalanes.k12.ca.us.

California Arts & Crafts Movement: Explore the evolution of this 20th Century art form with Associate Curator Julie Muniz. Community Hall at LLLC. Wed., Mar. 17, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Teens, Adults - No fee. Consortium@lafayettelib.com.

"New Images of Old Orinda," presented by Connie de Laveaga Stoops and the Orinda Historical Society. March 10, 7p.m., Fellowship Hall, Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda. Free and open to the public. A presentation of newly discovered photographs taken by Orinda pioneer E.I. de Laveaga from post-earthquake San Francisco and Orinda, 1906-1909.

MUSIC

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 p.m. 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.

The Cantare Chamber Ensemble joins the acclaimed Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir to present "Let Freedom Ring!" a powerful concert recounting the heroic journey of African Americans from slavery to freedom. Saturday, February 20th, 7:30p.m. at Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. Tickets are \$25, \$20 and \$10. For tickets call (510) 836-0789 or go online to www.cantarecon-vivo.org/BuyTickets.asp.

The Tenth Anniversary of the Lafayette Jazz Festival, presented by the Generations in Jazz Foundation will be performed at the new Lafayette Library Concert Hall, March 5th and 6th featuring jazz greats, The Frank Martin Group and Ellen Rowe and Friends. A celebration of Contra Costa Counties' best young jazz musicians will be held on March 7th with Middle and High School Honor Bands at the Veterans Memorial Building. Tickets are available at the Lafayette Chamber. Shows are a great value at \$5 for Thursday and Sunday and \$15 for Friday and Saturday night. For



ticket information, contact the Lafayette Chamber at (925) 284-7404 or visit their web site at www.lafayettechamber.org. For any questions or additional information call Tom Carter, (510) 219-2590.

The Northern California Welsh Community invites you to join us at a musical celebration of traditional hymn singing to celebrate ST. DAVID'S DAY, the patron saint of Wales. When: 2:00 - 4:00 p.m., Sunday, February 28. Where: Lafayette United Methodist Church, 955 Moraga Road, Lafayette (www.thelumc.org). A Te Bach (little tea) will follow in the church social hall. Coffee and tea will be provided. Donations of Welsh cakes and finger food would be appreciated. For further information, contact Idris Evans at (925) 283-0912 or by email at loriteassociates@comcast.net.

THEATRE

Lamorinda's 2010 High School Musicals See also page L3
Acalanes: Cinderella, March 3-6
Campolindo: The Titanic, March 11-13, tickets www.campochoir.com
Miramonte: Into the Woods, March 18-21 and 25-27

Town Hall Theatre is presenting Oscar Wilde's Victorian satire "The Importance of Being Earnest" Feb. 25 - March 27. For tickets, contact the Town Hall Theatre Box Office at (925) 283-1557, or purchase online at www.TownHallTheatre.com. (See article page L1)

The creative impulses of choreographers Janice Garrett and Charles Moulton



collide in an afternoon of dance works at Saint Mary's College on Sunday, February 28 at 2pm. This concert will consist of new work and recent hits co-choreographed by two of the Bay Area's most popular and respected dance makers. Please join us for a unique afternoon of high energy, agility and unsurpassed beauty as Garrett's and Moulton's choreography explodes on stage. Tickets for this performance are: \$15 for general, \$ 12 for seniors, SMC faculty and staff and Non-SMC students, \$ 5 for SMC students. For more information or to order tickets please call (925) 631-4670. LeFevre Theatre, Saint Mary's College, 1928 St. Mary's Rd. Moraga.

LUNAFEST a series of short films, by, for, and about Women. 3:30pm, Sunday, March 7, at Hagerty Lounge, De La Salle Hall, Saint Mary's College of California, 1928 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga. Tickets: \$10 General/\$6 Students. Ticket information at (925) 631-4193. Also playing Saturday March 6, at the Foothill Middle School at 3pm. All proceeds for the event will benefit Family of Women and the Breast Cancer Fund. LUNAFEST is brought to you by LUNA, the makers of the Whole Nutrition Bar for Women. For more information, visit www.lunafest.org.

LITERATURE & LECTURES

Come hear about "Roles Women Played in Contra Costa County History" on Sunday, February 21 at the brand new Lafayette Library. The Contra Costa County Interbranch Council of AAUW is hosting this free presentation from 2:00-4:00p.m. Refreshments will be available.

"Will Your Will Stand Up? Can You Trust your Trust?" With the new legal landscape, walk through the important steps you need to create certainty about your bequests. Tuesday February 23, 9:30 to 11am. Lafayette Library and Learning Center, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Call 283-6513 for reservations.

"How to Align Corporate Profit with Social Responsibility - In India" will be presented by Royce Nicholaisen, CEO of Otis McAllister, Inc. at the Men's Breakfast, Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive on February 24 at 6:30 a.m. The public, men and women, is invited to attend. Make reservations by calling (925) 283-8722. Cost for the meal is \$5.

There is no Fail Here, Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg, February 25, 2:00 p.m. Learn about the Gettysburg address in the context of the personal, political and policy pressures impacting President Lincoln. Speaker: John J. Fitzpatrick, Jr., Esq., Colonel USAFR(Ret.), a licensed guide at the Gettysburg National Military Park. Moraga Public Library, 1500 Saint Marys Road, Moraga, 925 376-6852. For additional activities see www.co.contra-costa.ca.us.

St. Mary's College's Kalmanovitz School of Education will have keynote speaker, Kathleen Kenfield, consultant in the field of English Learner education, at its Distinguished Speaker Event on Saturday, February 27th, from 8:30a.m.-1:00p.m. Register online at www.stmarys-ca.edu/saturdayseminars or contact Lydia Wiley at lwiley@stmarys-ca.edu for more information.

Museums & the Great Depression: Tales of Courage & Innovation. Enjoy historian Marjorie Schwarzer's illuminating talk about what museums did during the Great Depression to uplift & inspire communities & what we can learn from them in today's recession. Community Hall at LLLC Thurs. Mar. 4, 7:00-9:00p.m. No fee; consortium@lafayettelib.com. The Lafayette Library and Learning Center is located at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Weekly Wednesday evening program features prominent speakers on environmental stewardship and sustainability issues. Program begins at 6:00 p.m. with dinner followed by the speaker's presentation from 6:45 - 7:45. Admission is free, but donations for dinner are welcome. Youth Program and Childcare: Provided; please RSVP ((925) 254-3770) Location: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephen's Drive, Orinda (St. Stephen's exit off of Hwy 24) RSVP appreciated, but not required. Dates/speakers: February 24, The Reverend Canon Sally Bingham, President of Interfaith Power and Light; March 3, Laura Stec, San Francisco Bay Area chef, environmental food systems analyst, and author of Cool Cuisine.

Emeritus College offers "Mongolia" on Friday, March 5 from 11:00 - 12:30 p.m. in Rossmoor. Miss Ono Ganzorig discusses many fascinating aspects of her homeland from the early days of Genghis Khan's invasions of the west, her life growing up on the Mongolian Steppe, to watching her country rise from a Soviet Satellite to a proud democratic nuclear age nation. To register, call 685-1230 ext. 2388 or go to the website at www.dvc.edu/emeritus. Emeritus College offers not-for-credit, short-term, affordable classes. There are no tests and no homework.

Book Sale - Friends of the Orinda Library sale is Sat. March 6. 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. The book sale offers gently used books and many just-like-new ones for book lovers of all interests and ages. Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way, Orinda, 254-1358.

Creative Writing and Reading Series: Jane Vandenburgh, the author of two novels, Failure to Zigzag, and The Physics of Sunset, Her memoir, A Pocket History of Sex in the 20th Century, has just been published. She has taught literature and writing at U.C. Davis, at Georgetown and at the George Washington University in Washington, DC, and is this year's Distinguished Writer-in-Residence at Saint Mary's College of California. She lives in Point Richmond, California. When: Wednesday, March 10, 7:30 p.m. Where: Claeys Lounge, Soda Activity Center, Saint Mary's College of California, 1928 St. Mary's Rd. MFA Program at (925)631-4457.

"Healthy Eating: Delicious Vegetables," is a one day class on Thursday, March 18th from 12 to 2 p.m. at the Lafayette Community Center. Instructor Denise Jardine, NE., a certified Nutrition Educator will be holding an informative, healthy eating lecture and cooking demo. For those who enjoy a more hands on experience, you can help assemble the meal, or if you prefer simply sit back and enjoy. Call 685-1230 ext. 2388 to register.

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THE WOLFMAN
With Anthony Hopkins

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With Julia Roberts

Coming Soon

FEB 19
SUTTER ISLAND
With Leonardo DiCaprio

March 13

West Side Story

Not to be missed

Video Games, and Facebook: Are They a Modern Means of Essential Connection or Tools of Addiction and Exploitation? Monday, February, 22 from 7:00 to 9:00p.m. at the Miramonte High School Theatre. Steven Freemire, MFT, will discuss the many issues parents and teens face navigating the exciting and ever-changing, yet potentially harmful world of communication technologies. For flyer see <http://www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/parents/>. Click on "High School Information Nights."

Teens! Join the crew of the 46 foot S.S.S. (Sea Scout Ship) Sea Witch for a 2 night cruise to tour the Bay Model in Sausalito. The ship will depart the Martinez marina on Friday Feb. 26th at 6p.m, we'll tour the Bay Model & Sausalito Saturday Feb. 27th and return to the Martinez marina at approx. 1pm Sunday Feb. 28th. Cost is \$30 (includes cruise, meals and Bay Model tour). Space is limited. Sea Scouts is a non-profit youth maritime organization. No experience is required. Questions? Contact Communications Officer Mr. Rolf Lindenhayn at lindenhayn@sbcglobal.net (925) 917-0573.

Earthquakes: Build it, Shake it, Break it? Learn about different types of seismic waves & what it takes for structures to remain standing, then "be the quake" & see what happens! Arts & Science Discovery Center at LLC on Tues. Mar. 9. Session I: Grades 4 & 5, 3:15-4:00p.m. Session 2: Grade 6, 4:15-5:00 p.m. No fee. Sponsored by Chabot Space & Science Center. The Lafayette Library & Learning Center is at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd in Lafayette. Consortium@lafayettelib.com.

Underage Drinking: Let's Change the Culture! Monday, March 8th, 7-8:30 p.m. at the Campolindo High School Library. The Symposium will be informative and eye-opening, providing parents with the tools needed to deter their teens from drinking. Hosted by Campolindo High School Parents Club and Healthy Choices Committee.

Prom season has arrived and The Princess Project is giving away free prom dresses and accessories to high school girls who can't afford to buy a dress. East Bay Dress Giveaway: Saturday, March 13. Location: 2201 Broadway, Oakland, CA. San Francisco Dress Giveaway: Saturday, March 20 and Saturday March 27. All high school girls who are in financial need of a prom dress welcome; no proof financial need is required but must bring a valid high school I.D. to receive a free dress. Each girl will be able to shop and choose one accessory and one gown from thousands of gowns of all different colors, sizes, fabrics and designers. May bring one female companion to help. Wristbands for a specific appointment time during that day are given on a first come, first serve basis and are typically all distributed by 8 am. Arrive early. More info., www.princessproject.org.

TAXES

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 (1-800) 510-2020 or (925) 335-8749 for Tax Aide locations in your community.

Tax Talks. Ray Alessio, a 7-year tax preparer with H&R Block and an enrolled agent will discuss the latest tax changes and new tax legislation for 2009 in a public forum. Not only is everyone free to ask any questions related to taxes, but there is no charge for this event. Lafayette Library, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Saturday, February 20, Arts and Science Discovery Center at 1:00p.m.

FUN & GAMES

Lafayette's One and Only Pub Trivia will be held on Wednesday, February 24th, and March 31st. Trivia begins promptly at 6:30 p.m. and lasts approximately two-hours. The event will be held at Petar's, located at 32 Lafayette Circle in Lafayette. Get your friends, family, or co-workers together and form a team of two to five players. It's FREE to participate! Must be 21 years or older. Prizes awarded to winning teams. Pub Food

and drinks are available. Email questions to pubtrivia@live.com for additional information.

"Live at the Orinda" Champagne Comedy Event on March 5th begins with a gala champagne reception at 7:00 p.m., followed by laugh-packed performances from five comedians starting at 8:00 p.m. Contact the Orinda Chamber of Commerce at (925) 254-3909 or visit the Chamber's website at <http://www.orindachamber.org>. (See article page L3)

Rotary Club of Moraga is staging its 8th Annual "A Nite at the Races" event, with no host cocktails, wine, and beer, a professionally catered dinner not including crab, video horse races and betting, and silent and live auction. The cost is \$40. Some winnings from betting can be applied to pay for silent auction items. It will be held Saturday night, March 13, 2010 at the Holy Trinity Cultural Center on School Street in Moraga. For information and reservations, please contact Barbara Bruner at (925) 376-4281 (barbrunner@comcast.net). All proceeds from this event will fund local youth educational and humanitarian causes. Every dollar donated toward ending polio will be matched by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

OTHER

The Princess Project will be collecting new and nearly new formal gowns and accessories at The Bentley School in Lafayette until February 19. The organization is depending on the generosity of women and companies throughout the Bay Area to help send local girls to prom next spring. Dresses should be fashionable formal gowns, party or cocktail dresses in excellent condition, dry-cleaned and on hangers.

On Saturday February 27 at 10:00 a.m., tree pruning experts will be at McDonnell Nursery to discuss Fruit Tree Pruning. Please call or email to reserve a seat. (925) 254-3713 or info@mcdonnellnursery.com. McDonnell Nursery, 196 Moraga Way in Orinda. www.mcdonnellnursery.com.

St. Mark's United Methodist Church, located at 451 Moraga Way in Orinda, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. The highlight of the celebrations will be held on Sunday, March 7, starting with the worship celebration at 10:30 a.m., the Reverend Dr. Jim Current (pastor from 1976-1984) preaching, followed by a Gala Reception. Any and all members of the community are invited to join the congregation on this festive occasion. Alumni of the Nursery School are especially welcomed. If you have stories to tell or pictures to share, please pass them along! We will be compiling a booklet and slide show of submissions. For more information, contact Pastor Mark Zier, (925) 324-8130.

Acalanes High School's annual International Night is coming up March 18. We are currently looking for food donations, performers, and cultural clothing. Any of these would be much appreciated! Please email us at ahsdiversityboard@gmail.com.

Tuesday, February 25, 6:00-8:00p.m., The Philosophy of Wine: An Introduction where wine expert Professor Chad Arnold will discuss the intricacies of winemaking ... and tasting. Adult program. Fee for materials \$15. Presented by St. Mary's College, a Glenn Seaborg Learning Consortium partner at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. Call (925) 293-6513 for reservations.

Emergency Preparedness for Individuals and Families on Wednesday, Feb. 24, 7:00-9:00p.m. Don't put it off any longer! This quick and easy session will help you prepare yourself and your family for the next earthquake whether you are at home, work, or out and about. Emphasis will be on earthquake preparation, but the information applies to other emergencies as well. Bring pencil and paper. Materials will be provided. Lafayette Community Center, 500 St. Mary's Rd. in the Elderberry Room (back parking lot). Class is taught by the Emergency Preparedness Commission and is FREE. Register by calling the Lafayette Community Center at 284-2232.

Neighborhood Captains' Training,

Wednesday, March 3, 7:00-8:30p.m. This session is designed to help you organize your block or neighborhood in becoming self-sufficient for the first 72 hours following a major disaster. Prior attendance at a basic preparedness class, CERT or Red Cross class is recommended, but not required. Bring pencil and paper. Materials will be provided. Lafayette Community Center, 500 St. Mary's Rd. in the Elderberry Room (back parking lot). Class is taught by the Emergency Preparedness Commission and is FREE. Register by calling the Lafayette Community Center at 284-2232.

Looking Across the Boarder: Exploring End-of-Life Issues. Saturday, February 20, 10:00a.m.- 3:00p.m. Bortin Hall, Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, 55 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear presentations on elder-law matters, financial planning, Hospice, medical advance directives, and more. A panel of church members who have experienced the loss of a spouse, parent, or child will share their thoughts on bereavement. No Charge. Bring a bag lunch; drinks will be provided. To register: (925) 934-3135 or email admin@mduuc.org.

CLUBS

Commonwealth Club: Steve Poizner, CA Insurance Commissioner & Republican Gubernatorial Candidate, shares his plans to address the state's economy & other challenges as he positions his run against Meg Whitman. Thurs. Mar. 18, 5:30 p.m. check in and 6:30 p.m. program. Veterans Memorial Building, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Tickets: (415) 597-6705 or commonwealthclub.org.

Lamorinda Republican Women Federated Club Luncheon Meeting, Thursday, February 18. Check-in: 11:30a.m. Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante, Orinda. Special Guest Speaker: Tom Campbell, 2010 GOP Primary Candidate for U.S. Senate. Tickets: \$25 luncheon OR \$15 program only (no meal). Meeting is open to the public. Call (925) 254-8617 for luncheon reservations by Monday, February 15. Walk-ins without prepayment OK for program only (no meal). Additional details are available at the club's website lamorindarepublicanwomen.org.

Lamorinda Toastmasters offers a mutually supportive and positive learning environment where people can practice public speaking and leadership skills. Visitors are welcome on Tuesday evenings from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Temple Isaiah Social Hall, 3800 Mt. Diablo Blvd in Lafayette. Entrance to the Temple is on Risa Road. For more information, call (925) 385-8793, or visit our website, lamorinda@fetoasthost.net (no www at the beginning!) this website address doesn't work

The Moraga Women's Society will meet on Monday, February 22 at 9:30 at the Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School St. The speaker will be Anne Randolph, a Physical Therapist who specializes in geriatric outpatient care. Visitors are welcome. Contact President Roberta Klaproth, 376-0708.

The Orinda Women's Club announces its acceptance of applicants for its 2010 benefit and fundraising activities. Application forms can be acquired from Orinda Women's Club Post Office Box 533, Orinda, Ca. 94563 or from Adeline Mcclatchie, Beneficiary Chair at (925) 254-1162. The Beneficiary Chair must receive applications by March 1, 2010, 7p.m. Applicants must meet the following criteria: they must serve women and children in need. They need to be an Alameda and/or Contra Costa based non-profit organization receiving \$750,000 and below in annual income. The applications will be reviewed, processed and voted on by club Membership.

"IN CONCERT": A flower show presented by the Orinda and Piedmont Garden Clubs (affiliated with Garden Club of America) at Orinda Country Club on Friday, March 5th from 10:00-4:00 p.m. The flower show is open to the public at no charge and includes competition for floral design, horticulture and photography divisions.

Dining • Dining • Dining •

No Need to go to Gilroy

Roya's Garlic Garden is right here

By Linda U. Foley



Roya Azdanlou presenting her bar

Photos Linda U. Foley

Following in the footsteps of two flamboyant Italian Restaurants (Pasta Per Tutti and most recently Knoxx) is Roya's Garlic Garden in the heart of Lafayette.

The restaurant opened a month ago and serves lunch and dinner. It is redecorated in tones of earthy green, taupe and burgundy and the tables are set with white crisp cloths and black napkins. The owner and chef Roya Azdanlou—while working in the open kitchen—was graciously accepting the comments of departing patrons.

The luncheon menu changes daily and, except for the New York steak and accompaniments at \$15.99, the selections were listed at \$9.99 including bread/butter, salad, coffee or tea. The house wine is Hogue Vineyards and lists at \$7 a glass and \$26 per bottle. All very reasonable.

While Roya served an Italian wine she'd selected for me for its oaky flavor, Mezzacorona from Vignette delle Dolomiti, we had a chance to talk.

A native of Teheran, she and her family emigrated to England when she was 14, where Roya attended school. At 18, she found herself in Sweden and eventually in culinary school. One of five siblings, she's the only one who followed in her father's footsteps to become a restaurateur. Roya and husband Hamid owned a restaurant in Sweden which explains some of the unusual dishes on the menu (Pannbiff, a kind of hamburger and Black and White sauce, a combination of Bernaise and wine sauces). The Azdanlous, who also own a restaurant in Emeryville, take pride in preparing everything from scratch and using fresh and seasonal ingredients.

When the generous salad serving came, it was very crisp with separate balsamic dressing. The baguette had good consistency and the butter was room temperature and spreadable, both of which are a plus.

I ordered the skewered salmon, served with Hollandaise sauce alongside salt potatoes with

fresh parsley. The fish was very fresh and excellent; tasty and succulent on the inside and a bit crunchy on the outside, and the sauce was definitely made in-house and not cloyingly rich. The potatoes were an unexpected but perfect accompaniment to the salmon which usually tends to be served with mashed potatoes or rice.



Skewered salmon, Hollandaise sauce, salt potatoes and fresh parsley

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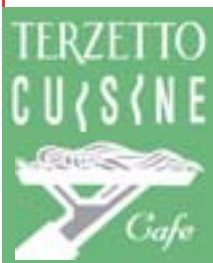
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LYNN'S TOP FIVE --- SENIOR POWER!

By Lynn Ballou, EA, CFP®

My husband's parents, in their late 80s, are living in Livermore now. Up until last year, they had spent the past 30 years enjoying retirement in the rural foothills of the Sierras, living in a home they built themselves, on a few acres, with gorgeous views and an abundance of wildlife. All was well, life was enjoyable and everything was fine until very quickly, the aging process caught up with them and it became clear that immediate action was necessary.

Thankfully, although they are very private people, they are also very smart. Powers were in place to allow their four children to swoop in and make all the arrangements necessary to relocate them close by, in a lovely and safe environment, and to manage their medical care and financial well being. How? Because not only had they set up a will and living trust, but even more importantly, they paid attention to all the powers associated with that trust, kept them very current and did a good job of communicating these plans with their children in advance.

When you think about your estate plan, you typically focus on what happens to your assets when you pass away. And ultimately important though that is, we often gloss over the aspects of estate planning that actually allow those whom we trust to make decisions for us while we are alive, if we cannot appropriately or completely make them for ourselves.

I spoke recently with Paula Leibovitz and Annette Knox, two local and extremely knowledgeable estate planning attorneys, who are in fact Certified Specialists in Estate Planning. They shared with me their thoughts on what Seniors need to focus on now.

1) WHO WILL BE THERE FOR YOU?

Paula, whose practice, Leibovitz Law Group, is in Orinda, says "My big focus with seniors is to make certain they have a successor in place that can assist them should they become incapacitated or unable to help themselves." It's so easy to lose track of what you may have set up many years ago. It's time to dust off the plan and see if those you have named are still appropriate. Often you'll find your children should now step into roles that you may have previously thought your friends or siblings could handle. As we all age together, it's difficult to think about who will be capable and caring in these roles in the future --- not just today. Those we thought to lean on earlier in life, may no longer be the best choice.

2) A LIVING TRUST SERVES BEST WITH GREAT POWERS!

It's astonishing to me how many of us think we are done once we have our will and trust in place. However, as Annette, who practices with Donahue Gallagher Woods in Walnut Creek discusses, "A common misconception among clients is that if they have a living trust, they do not need a durable power of attorney. The durable power of attorney is still a necessity in the event of incapacity because the trustee may have no control over certain assets or matters, for example, filing individual tax returns." Powers, in concert with your will and trust, complete your plan.

3) WHAT'S THE BACK UP PLAN?

Both Paula and Annette, pointed out that often we forget that we also need an alternate solution in place. Sometimes those we would like to lean on will no longer be available to us in time of need. For example, one of our client's had named a

niece as successor trustee. Subsequently the niece encountered a complex personal situation that no longer enabled her to serve in this role. Thankfully successors were listed and were in place to spring into action when needed. Without those successors "the court would have had to step in to appoint a successor trustee and possibly a conservator to oversee her other financial and personal affairs," Annette clarified.

4) DIFFERENT POWERS, DIFFERENT PEOPLE?

We run into this issue quite frequently in our own practice. If you are not comfortable having the same trustees handle your medical care as would handle your financial affairs, it's okay to separate those duties out! That is in fact, exactly what my husband's parents have done, using the skill set of each of their children, their emotional capabilities and their physical proximity (or not!) judiciously.

5) ACCOUNT TITLING AND BENEFICIARY DESIGNATIONS:

This is an extremely important issue. Frequently in the day to day craziness that is life, we do things that are expedient --- but not necessarily correct! We might dash in and open a Roth IRA on April 15th, or refinance our home and then be rushed to meet the deadline, not really knowing what to do about titling and designating beneficiaries and just putting something in on the fly, saying to ourselves that we'll fix it later! But will we? All of your assets need to be considered to be the elements of your plan that are out in the world, but still need to be brought back to the fold. Paula notes that "the correct title on an account and the language on a beneficiary designation can be as important as what your will or trust says!" Keep with your written instruc-

tions from your estate planning attorney regarding how to list assets and how to write up beneficiary sections. That way you'll get it right the first time!

So, as part of your tax season preparation process this year and every year, make a commitment to yourself to dust off your estate plan, read through it carefully and check out who you've named as your support team with these Powers. Consult with your legal team to correct and update items that need change. And, very private though you may be, be sure to communicate your plans to those whose job it is to be there for you when you cannot be there for yourself! And as Paula reminds us, "it's also good to let everyone know where documents and accounts are." Let's not make this a mystery hunt! It will be so much better for all when the time comes for the plan to spring into action if your team is knowledgeable and ready to go!



Lynn Ballou is a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) and co-owner of Ballou Plum Wealth Advisors, LLC, a Registered Investment Advisory (RIA) firm in Lafayette. Lynn is also a Registered Principal and Branch Manager with LPL Financial (LPL). As such, she is required by securities regulations to add the following information to this column: The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and not intended to provide specific advice or recommendation for any individual. Securities offered through LPL Financial, member FINRA/SIPC. Reach Lynn Ballou at lynn@ballouplum.com

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A Dog Named Hazel

By Jean Follmer



Darcy Cole shares a smile with her new dog, Hazel

In 2005, Darcy Cole decided to surprise her husband, Brett, for his 40th birthday. Since Brett is a major fan of barbequed ribs, Darcy decided to take him and five of his friends to the barbeque hotbed of Kansas City. They enjoyed countless ribs and visited the Harley Davidson Finishing Factory and The Woodlands Dog Track.

At Woodlands, Cole saw a dog by the name of "Mulberry Hazel" in the program. Coinciden-

tally, her mother's name is Hazel. "We bet on her to win and she won; I remember calling my mom to tell her," says Cole.

In August of 2007, Cole's mother passed away. Cole came across the old program and remembered seeing greyhound adoption tables in front of The Woodlands Dog Track. Woodlands closed in August of 2008. The next month, Darcy contacted Mulberry Hazel's owner to see if he still had her and

if she was available for adoption. Mulberry Hazel had been injured but was kept on for breeding purposes. The owner told Darcy she could have the dog when he was done with her. Mulberry Hazel had two more litters of puppies before she came to live with the Cole family in Lafayette. Cole guesses she probably had six litters of puppies in the last two years.

Compared to many greyhound stories, Hazel's is a happy

one. According to local non-profit organization Greyhound Friends for Life, hundreds of greyhounds "grade off (become unprofitable) every day, leaving kennel owners with expenses but no income from the uncompetitive racers. Some kennels will hold on to failed racers for as long as possible, but for most it's strictly business." With dog tracks closing throughout the country, many dogs are euthanized simply because they have nowhere to go.

"I'm in love with this breed and that's why I want to get the word out," says Cole. Cole notes that a lot of people are under the misimpression that greyhounds are hyper and need a lot of exercise. Actually, they are relaxed, loving companions, according to Cole. "She's my 40-mile-per-hour coach potato," says Cole. The greyhound's speed is something for prospective owners to consider. "My biggest concern is never letting her off the leash," says Cole. In fact, Greyhound Friends for Life is adamant that the dogs should always be kept on a leash if they're not in an enclosed area.

It would be hard to say which one is luckier or who really rescued who. Mulberry Hazel definitely won the race that matters and Cole gets to smile every day when she says her mom's name. For more information about local greyhounds, visit www.greyhoundsforlife.org or nationally www.adopt-a-greyhound.org.

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• Big Birthdays! •

Helen Vurek Celebrates Her 100th Birthday

Submitted by Jerry Vurek



Photo submitted

Helen Vurek celebrated her 100th birthday with nearly 90 relatives and friends at the Orinda Community Center. Helen has lived in Orinda for more than 70 years, having moved here in 1939.

Pictured above is Helen with a friend from Tokyo, Japan, Miyako Kodaira. Miyako and her husband, Eimei, were married at Helen's home in 1974.

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Lamorinda Chambers of Commerce Step Up to Help Schools

By Sophie Braccini



The Moraga Chamber gives a check to MEF (L-R): Chamber board member Grant Stubblefield, Chamber President Edy Schwartz, MEF President Shari Simon, MEF Chair of Business and Community Relations Eric Andresen

Photo Sophie Braccini

Businesses across Lamorinda proudly display the little plaques that local sports teams, schools and foundations have given them in thanks for their support. But that is not the only way the business community comes through for the schools. As the education system suffers financially due to deep cuts to State funding, the local Chambers of Commerce, which have long understood that schools are part of the system that sustains them, are strengthening their efforts to support our schools.

The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce has been donating proceeds from its signature business events to the Lafayette Arts and Science Foundation (LASF) and the Lafayette School District for many years. "When we started the Art and Wine Festival fifteen years ago, LASF was the only beneficiary of the event," recalls Jay Lifson, the Chamber's Executive Di-

rector, "since then we've added other recipients, but the Foundation has remained the primary beneficiary." Last year the Chamber gave \$8,500 to LASF and Lifson believes that over the years the Chamber has contributed nearly 70,000 to LASF in addition to a dozen other charities that benefit from the festival.

The second big Lafayette Chamber fundraiser that benefits the schools is the Lafayette Reservoir Run. "Each year the Chamber is able to donate \$15,000-\$20,000 to the PTAs at each of our five local schools," adds Lifson.

For Lifson, giving to the schools is a natural act. "We live and work in this incredible community of Lamorinda and the base for it is education," says Lifson. "We live in a symbiotic relationship with the schools and it is not only the money that makes the relationship so wonderful, it is the vol-

unteers who create the kind of community we live in."

Lifson is aware that local home values are linked to the quality of the public schools, and so is Edy Schwartz, the President of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce. "We all know this and our realtors confirm it; the first reason people move to our communities is the school districts," says Schwartz, "and with the extreme cuts from the State, it is most important to give to the schools." Sue Breedlove, President of the Orinda Chamber, agrees with her, "It's more imperative than ever to help our schools when funding is becoming so difficult to get," says Breedlove.

As a result, the Orinda Chamber of Commerce will donate some of the proceeds from the upcoming Live at the Orinda, an evening of comedy at the Orinda Theater, to the Educational Foundation of Orinda (EFO). "For the last two years the Chamber has held the Orinda Restaurant Tour and more than 30% of every ticket sale went to EFO," adds Breedlove, "In 2008 we donated \$2500 and in 2009 \$2100. Most likely, we will do the same thing this fall."

In Moraga, the Moraga Education Foundation (MEF) is a member of the Chamber of Commerce. Until recently, the support of the business community had primarily been through generous business owners contributing directly to school auctions and the MEF. But this year the Chamber Board felt that the situation was so critical that it had to do something more, and in January it decided to donate \$1,000 to MEF. "Now more than ever it is vital that Moraga's parents and citizens, schools, and businesses join forces to support and maintain our community," said Eric Andresen, the chair of the MEF Business and Community Partners Committee upon receiving the check, "Our property values, our community and even our cherished way of life depend upon the continued success of our businesses and upon the unparalleled reputation of our schools. We're all in this together, and working together we can and will maintain what we've all come to know and love as our home."

business briefs



Photo Sophie Braccini

Jack in the Box Closed By Environment Health Services

During a routine inspection on February 1st, the Environmental Health Division of Contra Costa County Health Services observed three major violations at the Jack in the Box restaurant located at 1440 Moraga Way in Moraga. The violations were: lack of diligent preparation practices, major improper disposal of liquid waste and unapproved unclean floor surfaces. The fast food restaurant was ordered to close until the sanitary conditions are restored. Moraga Senior Planner Rich Chamberlain confirmed that the restaurant had a drainage problem with their sewer system. Chamberlain indicated that he had been contacted by the operator of the restaurant, and that the operator claimed plans to conduct improvements to the restaurant as the repairs were done, such as installing an ADA compliant bathroom.

Lafayette Car Wash & Detail Center Celebrates 20 Years of Business

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 "We would like to thank our customers for all of their support over these past 20 years," said Jess Wellan, Owner of the Lafayette business. The company was cited in "The Pipeline," EBMUD's newsletter, as a car wash that recycles 50 to 60% of its professional water use. "We understand the importance of being a 'green' business and we are constantly striving to diminish our carbon footprint", says Wellan.

New Short Sale Specialists

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AmberPoint bought by Oracle

Oracle announced at the beginning of February the acquisition of the Oakland-based company AmberPoint, founded by Orinda resident John Hubinger and Danville resident Paul Butterworth. The Oracle announcement can be found at <http://www.oracle.com/us/corporate/press/048842>. Over the years, Butterworth and Hubinger have brought a great deal of business to the East Bay. With their lead-

ership at Ingres, Forte and, most recently, AmberPoint, they are responsible for bringing several hundred jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue to the East Bay.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

- Big Band Dance on Friday, February 19 starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Building. Tickets \$10 available at the Chamber of Commerce and the Lamorinda Music Store.
- Ribbon Cutting with the Chamber for Roy's Garlic Garden on Thursday, February 18 starting at 5:00 p.m. 3576 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette
- Cloud Computing Seminar, Friday, February, 19, 9:00a.m., Chamber Conference Room
- "Green Your Business" Workshop offered by the Lafayette Green Committee on February 23rd from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Chamber. Green Committee volunteers will be on hand to help you get started, evaluate current practices and help GREEN businesses. In 15 minutes, they can evaluate a business and determine if it qualifies as a Lafayette Green Business. Refreshments will be served. This event is free. Businesses that have already "pledged" to be a Lafayette Green Business should complete their checklist by March 20th. They will be recognized at the Earth Day Celebration on April 25th.
- Business Issues/Government Affairs Committee Open Meeting on February 25 at 8:00 a.m. at the Chamber office.

Moraga

The Chamber held a meeting to brainstorm the future of the Chamber over the next several years in preparation for the development of a formal business plan. Subjects covered were our two websites, www.moragachamber.org and www.shopmoragafirst.com, membership growth, management and volunteer needs, annual sponsored events and any miscellaneous topics the group wished to brainstorm. "Eleven groups of three to five Chamber members each produced a plethora of ideas, suggestions and solutions," said Larry Tessler, Chamber Vice-President, "Interestingly there was little duplication of ideas, indicating the broad perspective brought to the table by this diverse group of business operators, town government officials, individual citizens and leaders of various interest groups." Ideas ranged from money raising opportunities to producing an event calendar to social networking to bumper sticker marketing and more. The Chamber Board will attempt to establish priorities within each category for presentation to the membership in March for further refinement.

Orinda

The Orinda Chamber of Commerce proudly presents a new event in 2010: A champagne-splashed evening of live professional comedy in conjunction with Tommy T's Comedy House of Pleasantry, and the Lamorinda Film and Entertainment Foundation. The whole community is invited to fill the 750 seat Orinda Theatre to laugh until your sides hurt. 17 and over. Friday March 5th, Orinda Theatre, Theatre Square. Make your reservations online at orindachamber.org.

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

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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Also inside:
Schools
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Campolindo Wins DFAL

Miramonte, Acalanes Should See Post-season Action

By Conrad Bassett



Kellen Ito (#25) blocks Acalanes attack. He is watched by teammates Patrick Wirth (#4) and Adam Mancebo (#14)



Corey Collins (#20) dribbled by Pat Wirth Photo Douh Kohen

Last Tuesday night, the Acalanes Dons boys' basketball team brought their 7-1 DFAL record and five-game win streak into Moraga for a rematch against first place Campolindo. The Dons hot streak did not help them against the Cougars as they lost, 57-40.

The Dons scored first when senior Jay Fowler hit a jumper. Campo answered right back when senior Brian Sanders stole the ball and went the length of the

court for a layup. The lead changed hands several times in the period with Campo clinging to a 13-12 lead after one. The Cougars' senior Pat Wirth provided much of the offense with two three-pointers.

Campo started to pull away in the second quarter. After trading baskets, the Cougars went on a 12-5 run to end the period and take a 30-20 lead into the locker room at the half.

The Dons' senior Corey

Collins hit a three to open the second half to cut the lead to seven, but the Dons got no closer. A tenacious Campo defense led by junior Erik Baker forced the Dons into several turnovers, missed shots and a scoreless spell that lasted almost six minutes in the third and fourth periods. The defensive effort allowed the Cougars to extend the lead to 44-29. Collins hit another three to make it 44-32 but senior Kellen Ito came right back down and

scored on a pass from King and the Cougars never looked back.

The last few minutes of the game turned into a Campolindo free throw clinic with Sanders, Keeble and Wirth each hitting two free throws.

Collins led all scorers with 16 points while Fowler added 11. The Cougars' balanced attack featured King with 14, Wirth with 13 and Ito with 10. Ito and Mancebo each added nine rebounds.

This win, coupled with their 32-22 win over Dougherty Valley last Friday, gave Campolindo an 11-0 DFAL record (21-4 overall) and they clinched their fourth DFAL boys championship in the last five years. The Cougars close the regular season against Alhambra at home on Friday night. The Dons dropped to 7-2 in the DFAL and 14-10 in all games.

The NCS seeding meeting will be held on Sunday, February 21 and the Division III bracket

where the three Lamorinda teams compete will have a minimum of 12 teams. Campo will get a high seed along with Bishop O'Dowd, Analy, and El Cerrito and likely a first round bye and then a home game. Acalanes will also make the field. Miramonte (12-12) blasted Dublin on Friday 77-40 and has played a strong schedule and a win against either Acalanes or Las Lomas in their final two games should get them in, as well.

Natural Instinct and Hard Work Pay Off

Miramonte Senior Signed with Cal

By Lou Fancher



Jon Sibley Photo provided

A great goalie has a presence about him. Intellect says the sloping shoulders, cobra-length arms and fluid physicality are perfect equipment for water polo. However, it's instinct that makes a person certain that Jon Sibley, all-star leader of Miramonte High School's water polo team, is meant to be in the water.

Head Coach James Lathrop has been watching Sibley play for years. "He's willing to throw himself in front of a ball," he says, singing praise for the valued player. Lathrop notes Sibley's studious approach, his ability to encourage and understand his teammates, his fearlessness. "He's going to find a way to get better, no matter what, no matter where," he predicts.

Swimming for Sleepy Hollow Swim Club as a young boy, Sibley admits he didn't like water polo when he started learning the game. It wasn't until he was positioned as goalie that he developed a feel for the sport. "Back then, all you

needed to be was big," he says, downplaying his ability.

Now, six years later, Sibley is using that reach to place his team at the top of its league and to earn honors: #1 Team All-American, member of 2009's USA Junior National Team, and a Golden Bear. Sibley has signed a letter of intent to attend Cal Berkeley on scholarship. With offers from Pepperdine, UCLA and USC lobbed in his direction, Cal's program blocked the competition. In the end, it was a gut feeling that made the choice obvious for Sibley. "I've been a Bear all my life," he says simply.

While Sibley relied on instinct for making his college choice, his operating system for

playing water polo springs from the opposite direction. "I keep a notebook on different players," he says. Last year, he won a spot on the Junior National Team and traveled to Croatia to compete in the world championships. "He came back from Croatia with a list of drills he saw other teams doing," Coach Lathrop says. And Sibley puts in overtime, studying with Jack Bowen, a well-know Bay area guru to goalies; even going to his kid sister, Kirsten, for her "custom" approach to practice drills. She and their mother work on his hand-eye coordination and rapid response reflexes by shooting bullets—of the Nerf variety—at him.

This season, the Mira-

monte team could have been lightweights. The entire starting line-up, other than Sibley, graduated in 2009, leaving the team in need of a leader. Like any talented coach, Lathrop developed a strategy to not only win games, but to establish Sibley in that role. "We played our defense to maximize our strengths," Lathrop says. Although disinclined to tell others what to do, Sibley became the team's leader and is grateful. With dreams of winning a national championship at Cal, perhaps earning a degree in environmental policy and economics, and playing professionally in Europe after college, Sibley knows that getting the team together is the most important element of winning.

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SMC's Louella Tomlinson Breaks Records



After breaking the NCAA Division I Single Season and Career blocks records on Thursday, Louella Tomlinson (#2) posted a double-double in the match-up against Portland. The Gaels sported pink in honor of the WBCA PinkZone and breast cancer awareness. Photo Tod Fierner

On Thursday, February 11, Saint Mary's women's basketball star Louella Tomlinson broke two NCAA Division I records. In the match-up against Gonzaga, Tomlinson recorded five blocks and in doing so, she notched 166 blocks in the season and 483 blocks in her career, leading the NCAA. Despite the defensive effort, Saint Mary's was not able to hold off the Bulldogs and fell 88-75.

"I would take a win over the blocked shots. I think

we could get that team," Tomlinson said.

On Saturday the Gaels took to the court again, hosting the Portland Pilots. Saint Mary's came out on fire and built a 19 point lead with six minutes left in the first half. The Pilots refused to quit and finished the half with a 19-6 run, reducing the Gaels' lead to six points, 36-30.

The teams played even in the second half and Saint Mary's managed to squeak out a 67-64 win.

C.Graveson

Saint Mary's Drops Two on the Road

By Justine Sgalio



Omar Samhan (#50)

Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's Gaels (21-5, 8-3 WCC) fell hard last week on the road. On Thursday, they took on the Gonzaga Bulldogs (21-4, 8-1 WCC) in Spokane and were steam rolled 80-61. The team traveled to Portland (16-8, 7-3 WCC) on Saturday looking for a bounce-back win. The Gaels were not able to overcome the Pilots and lost in overtime 80-75.

Though the game against Gonzaga started off in the Gaels' favor, it wasn't long before Gonzaga's offense took charge. Despite a solid first half outing by the Gaels, who went into halftime down 36-33 after a 3-point buzzer beater by Gonzaga's senior guard Matt Bouldin, the Gaels were not able to maintain their pace in the second half. With 14:34 to go in the second half, the Bulldogs were up by nine and their lead quickly shot to 15 with just over 10 minutes to go in the game, eventually giving the Bulldogs the 80-61 win over the Gaels.

Going into last week, the Gaels had not lost a conference road game all season and were looking to extend their six game win streak that started January 16 at McKeon Pavilion against Portland. Their three losses, against Vanderbilt (November 20 at home), USC (December 23, in Hawaii at the Diamond Head Classic) and Gonzaga (January 14 at home) were all considered to be "good" losses—if there is such a thing—meaning RPI points for the Gaels, something that could poten-

tially work in their favor come post-season play.

Though any combination of wins or losses last week would still leave the Gaels' post-season fate to be determined, at least one road win would have secured them a number two conference standing the remainder of regular season play, pending wins over San Diego (February 18 in San Diego), Pepperdine (February 25 at home) and Loyola Marymount (February 27 at home), all games in which Saint Mary's is favored to win.

But the Gaels aren't planning on throwing in the towel anytime soon, and aren't even thinking about post-season play at this point. "When it comes right down to it, all we can do is try to keep winning," said Saint Mary's Head Coach Randy Bennett. "As a team, we just have to focus on winning the rest of our games and just see what happens."

But if the Gaels post-season hopes include an NCAA tournament bid, they are going to have to step up their game the next few weeks, especially during the WCC Tournament in Las Vegas on March 5-7, assuming Gonzaga continues their reign in the current WCC standings.

Earning the title of WCC tournament champions would mean an automatic NCAA bid for the Gaels, something they have to accomplish in order to ensure NCAA tournament play. An at-large bid could still be in the cards for the Gaels even if they don't walk away WCC tournament champions, but head coach

Bennett is not counting on that. "You have to go into it thinking you aren't getting one [at-large bid]," Bennett said. "At this point, we're just assuming worst case scenario and not counting on one and focusing on winning all our games the next three weeks."

The Gaels took an early first half lead against the Pilots Saturday, and after a 3-pointer by sophomore forward Clint Steindl with 10:48 to go in the half, Saint Mary's was up by 11. But an 11 point run by the Pilots that started with 2:22 to go in the half left the Gaels trailing 44-35 at halftime.

The Pilots extended their lead to 13 early in the second half, but the Gaels, led by junior guard Mickey McConnell, fought hard to break the margin to five with 11:32 to go in the game. A lay-up by senior center Omar Samhan put the Gaels ahead 72-70 with 40 seconds left, but Portland guard T.J. Campbell answered back with a lay-up, followed by a Saint Mary's foul and a turnover forced the game into overtime.

In overtime, a three pointer by McConnell put the Gaels up by one with 2:56 to go, but the Gaels fell behind shortly after two turnovers and two missed shots. Foul shots by Campbell with nine seconds to go sealed the deal for the Pilots, giving them the 80-75 win over the Gaels.

Saint Mary's travels to San Diego this week to take on the Toreros on Thursday, February 18 at 8 p.m. The game will be televised on ESPN2.

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is an independent publication, produced by and for the residents of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, CA

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SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

World Record Broken by Lamorinda Mom

Submitted by Claude Zamanian



Alison Zamanian swimming freestyle in practice last week

Photo provided

The results of The Olympic Club 1500 Swim Meet are in, and a world record was broken by Orinda resident Alison Zamanian.

Zamanian, an Orinda resident for ten years and the mother of three sons, broke the world record for her age group in the 1500 short-course meter (25m) freestyle event on January 16th. The previous record was held by Lynn Marshall of Canada set in 2002 with a time of 17:38.37. Zamanian beat the record by a whopping three seconds, 17:35.49.

Zamanian said that she felt strong the entire way and was

very happy about her time, especially since it was 13 seconds faster than the last time she swam back in October at the Walnut Creek Short Course Meter Championships. Zamanian said swimming long courses, along with cross-training (spin classes and running), has helped her build her strength and power off of the walls.

In addition to this accomplishment, Zamanian also broke her own National record in the one-hour postal swim on January 24th, swimming close to 5600 yards of freestyle in one hour. Her previous record in 2006 was 5525 yards.



Alison Zamanian

Photo provided

Not A Typical "Cross Country"

Submitted by Eric Lundgren



Patrick catching air at a race at E Street

Photo by the Lundgren family



Patrick Lundgren, a freshman at Acalanes High School, with his 2009 youth B championship #1 plate award

It was a little less than two years ago when Patrick Lundgren's parents somewhat reluctantly took him to his first motorcycle cross country race. He started racing regularly in October of 2008 in the C class (beginner) and was finishing consistently in the top five in his class and age group.

Lundgren races in the District 36 Motion Pro Youth Cross Country Series. A cross country race lasts an hour and a half for his class and age group and covers terrain of all types, fire roads, motor cross tracks, creek crossings, tight single track, hill climbs, and log crossings. The course usually varies in length from eight to 15 miles and the races

are all over Northern California. The district puts on about 15 races per year.

In 2009 he advanced to the B class (intermediate). He won the Season Points Championship for the B class in 2009. As a result of winning the season championship, he advanced to the A class (expert). He was also awarded the #16 plate for being ranked 16th overall in Northern California for youth cross country racing after the 2009 season. This will be his last year in the youth class.

He has a partial sponsorship with O'Neal MX and is featured on their web site this month in the amateur spotlight.

Acalanes Soccer Update

Submitted by Nancy Kaplan



Dons Varsity team

Photo Tod Fierner

February 10, Acalanes/Miramonte: 3-1. For their last home game, the Dons celebrated senior night with three goals and a comfortable win against the Mata-

dors. The first goal came after 13', when Dante Carrillo was at the reception of a long pass from senior Ben Ewing. Ten minutes later, Dylan Autran added the second one

on a precise shot in the lower corner. Fifteen minutes before the end of the game, Autran was again on target and sealed the win after a pass from junior Cam Carda.

February 12, Dougherty Valley/Acalanes: 1-2. The Dons concluded their DFAL season with an important win at Dougherty Valley that secured a second place finish behind Dublin and in front of Las Lomas. The host team scored first and led a big part of the game, Acalanes replied with two goals in two minutes. At the 67', sophomore Austen Grassini headed off a free-kick from senior and co-captain Nic Carrillo. A couple of minutes later, Carrillo took care of the second goal himself with a powerful shot from 25 yards. Acalanes (17-3-3, 8-3-1) is done with another successful regular season and now moves on to defend their NCS title. Seeded #4, the Dons will meet #13 Concord (DVAL) at home in the first round on Wednesday evening.

Adult Softball Sign-ups

Lamorinda (Men's), and Orinda Coed Softball Leagues play during the summer months on Orinda and Moraga fields. All games start at 6:30pm, on weeknights determined by your division. Playoffs are in August. If you would like to enter a team, or as an individual, please call Tom Boyden, City of Orinda Adult Sports Coordinator, at (925) 253-4216.



www.SMCGaels.com

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 - Sat, Feb 20 WBB San Diego McKeon Pavilion 2:00 PM
 - Sat, Feb 20 MTEN Loyola Marymount Moraga, CA 2:00 PM
 - Sun, Feb 21 MTEN Pacific Moraga, CA 12:00 PM
 - Sun, Feb 21 BSB San Jose State Louis Guisto Field 1:00 PM
 - Mon, Feb 22 BSB Nevada Louis Guisto Field 2:00 PM
 - Thu, Feb 25 MBB Pepperdine McKeon Pavilion 7:05 PM
 - Sat, Feb 27 MBB Loyola Marymount McKeon Pavilion 6:00 PM
 - Tue, Mar 2 BSB Sacramento State Louis Guisto Field 2:00 PM
 - Sat, Mar 6 WTEN Nevada Moraga, CA 11:00 AM
 - Sat, Mar 6 MTEN UC Davis Moraga, CA 12:00 PM
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SCHOOL CALENDAR

Acalanes Union
High School District
Board Room AUHSD Office
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette
Wednesday, Feb 17, 2010 at 7:30pm
Wednesday, Mar 3, 2010 at 7:30pm

Lafayette School District
LAFSD Office
3477 School Street, Lafayette
Wednesday, Mar. 10, 2010 at 7 pm

Budget: A Special Board Meeting will be held on February 17th and the superintendent's final budget recommendation will be given at a Special Board Meeting on February 24th. Both meetings will begin at 7:00 p.m. Please check the district website for further details: www.lafsd.k12.ca.us.

Moraga School District
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
Tuesday, Mar. 9, 2009 at 7:30 pm
Kindergarten: The Moraga School District Kindergarten registration will be held on March 4th and 5th, 2010 -- Thurs., Mar. 4 and Fri., Mar. 5 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Los Perales and Rheem Schools, and from 9:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. and 1:15 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Camino Pablo School. To register incoming kindergarten students, parents/guardians must go to the school their child will attend in the 2010-2011 school year.

Orinda Union School District
OUSD Office
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda
Monday, Mar. 1, 2009 at 4:00pm

Budget: The OUSD School Board has scheduled a special budget study session on February 17 at 6:00 p.m.

In Other News....

CP Spells Bee

Submitted by Wendy Feldman



(L-R) Lauren Rodriguez, Noah Todd, and Anya Li Photo provided Camino Pablo conducted its 5th Annual Spelling Bee Program on Friday, February 5, 2010. Nineteen students ranging from grades 3-5 were the contenders at a challenging, fun filled, exciting event that began promptly at 830 am and con-

cluded at 10:00. Over 15 rounds were completed, and by process of elimination, 4th grader Lauren Rodriguez was deemed Champion. Rodriguez has qualified to represent Camino Pablo Elementary School at the Contra Costa County Bee in late March. Also from 4th grade were 1st and 2nd runners-up Noah Todd and Anya Li, respectively. The winning word was ossuary.

The program is sponsored by the Camino Pablo PTA and organized by parent volunteers. Wendy Feldman, Spelling Bee Coordinator, was instrumental in bringing the Spelling Bee to the school 5 years ago and has overseen the program since its inception.



The Advanced Drama class at Campolindo High School performed four children's plays for the elementary school children of the Lamorinda community. The productions were self-written and directed, and acted by the students in the Advanced Drama class. Pictured from A Toy Tale are (bottom L to R) Marita Rittenhouse, Ian Hastings, and Gabby Olufson (top L to R) Frederick Layacan, Kaisa Rajahalmel, and Jacob Phillips. Photo T. Boero

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

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

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

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

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

to hear Gerna speak. He is teaching his class 'How to Give Your Kid a 4-Year College Education Without Going Broke!' on Saturday February 27th at the Moraga Library located at 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga, CA 94556 from 11:00am-12:15pm.

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

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

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

Lamorinda Schools

Lafayette Elementary's International Night

A Celebration of Cultures

By Rosylyn Aragoes Stenzel

With the theme sporting Winter Olympics, Lafayette Elementary School Families gathered Wednesday night, January 27th to celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity in the community.

In the school's multipurpose room there was plenty to eat, see, and do. Especially popular was the potluck brought in by the school's families - featuring foods from all over the world. Entertainment was also diverse; including Reggae music by Asheba from Trinidad, a Chinese Yo-Yo performance by Stanley Middle School Student Stephanie Brannon and a Tae Kwon Do demonstration from Yu's Martial Arts. Also, not to be missed were the Olympic-themed crafts, games, and student artwork.

Local businesses that made donations to International Night were Handlebar Toys, Mangia Pizzeria, Powell's Sweet Shoppe, Ming's Chinese Restaurant, Popchips/Carrie Dove Catering and Whole Foods.

Paulie Proffett and Janet Chen co-chaired the event. Says Proffett, "The goal of International Night is to raise cultural awareness and celebrate the family heritage of Lafayette Elementary's students." The 8th annual event, sponsored by the Lafayette PTA, attracts more than 300 students and families each year.



Stephanie Brannon wows the crowd with a Chinese Yo-Yo performance. Photo Matt Fabela

Committed to Scouting

Submitted by Linda Bailey Wurgley



Photo provided

Each year the Lafayette Service Unit of Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. recognizes girls who have completed 10 years as a Girl Scout. Young women in this community have lots of choices about how to spend their time, and the girls that were honored on January 26, 2010, have chosen and stuck with Girl Scouting among their many ac-

tivities for the past ten years. For these girls that means 10 years of making friends, providing service to others, camping, earning badges, going on outings, selling cookies, learning leadership skills, and having a lot of fun!

This year 21 girls in Lafayette reached this milestone. They are pictured above: Dana

Katz, Marisa Tashima, Adena Bauer, Zoe Bauer, Emily Bjerke, Julia Elliott, Madison Gerring, Lauren Mitchell, Lauren Riebs, Sarah Runyon, Melanie Vandenberghe, Caroline Wilcox, Kimberley Bowers, Carrie Braun, Kathryn Stabler, Lena Olufson, Mallory Loomis, Molly Quinn, Rachel Edwards, Elizabeth Gambel, Renita Thapa.

Lafayette Girl Scout Troop Honors Gold Award Recipients

Submitted by Gwenly Carrel



(L-R) Michelle Pelletreau, Gabriella Olufson, Megan Eustis, Jennifer Hardy, Katie Neff, Hayley Winther, Olivia Hirsch, Jenna Pettegrew, Marika Carrel, Jen Seroy, Diana Brownstein

Members of Girl Scout Troop 30752 were honored in a special ceremony in January at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church and nine were recognized for achieving Girl Scouts' highest honor, the Gold Award. In recognition of the Gold Award recipients' commitment to service, Lafayette Mayor Brandt Andersson presented each girl with a city proclamation that announces her birthday in 2010 as a day in her honor as a Gold Award Girl Scout.

The Girl Scouts who achieved their Gold Awards and their projects are: **Marika Carrel** - "Road to Recovery," organized and conducted an activity

day at Children's Hospital and created an educational video about cancer myths. She is a senior at Acalanes High School.

Megan Eustis - Conducted a swim clinic and water safety workshop for homeless and high-risk families. She is a senior at Campolindo High School.

Olivia Hirsch - "Warm Winter Nights," planned and hosted activities for homeless children living at a temporary shelter. She is a senior at Campolindo High School.

Katie Neff - Made a memory wall for Lafayette Elementary School's 28 drama productions. She is a senior at Acalanes High School.

Gabriella Olufson - Constructed safe stoves and hosted a safety workshop for children living in villages adjacent to the Guatemala City dump. She is a

senior at Campolindo High School. **Michelle Pelletreau** - "Making a House a Home," collected and delivered home furnishings for a home for a family of six through Shelter Inc. She is a senior at Campolindo High School.

Jenna Pettegrew - Constructed safe stoves and hosted a safety workshop for children living in villages adjacent to the Guatemala City dump. She is a senior at Campolindo High School.

Jen Seroy - Raised and trained a puppy for 15 months for Guide Dogs for the Blind. She is a senior at Acalanes High School.

Hayley Winther - "Road to Recovery," organized and conducted an activity day at Children's Hospital and made a quilt from patients' drawings which was given to the hospital. She is a senior at Acalanes High School.

To achieve her Gold Award, each Scout had to meet the criteria of putting talents and strengths into action and demonstrating commitment to themselves, their community and the future. Finally, the project had to involve assessment, planning documentation and evaluation, benefit others and involve at least 50 hours, usually requiring between 4 and 12 months to complete.

Troop members recognized for length of membership included Diana Brownstein (11 years) and Jennifer Hardy (13 years).

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Lamorinda Schools

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

AUHSD Prepares for Dramatic Budget Reductions

By Cristina Kim

The Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD), which includes Miramonte, Campolindo, Acalanes, Las Lomas, and Del Oro, is one of the top ranked high school districts in all of California. But the AUHSD has been heavily affected by California's current budget crisis. The Governor's proposed budget creates a \$4.8 million deficit for the school district in the 2010-2011 school year. As a result the AUHSD Board is having to take extreme measures to balance the budget, such as cutting seventh period, electives, closing a school site, and laying off teachers, counselors, and other staff.

On February 3rd, the AUHSD Board held an open meeting to address the financial crisis. The closure of Del Oro High School and the reduction of "Particular Kinds of Service", i.e. the reduction of district staff by 56.9 positions, were the meeting's major deliberations. The small boardroom was packed with concerned teachers, parents, and students.

At the meeting the school board voted to close Del Oro High School. AUHSD Superintendent John Stockton explains, "The proposed closure of Del Oro High School is especially upsetting due to the exemplary efforts and successes of the school. This decision is a result of the state education budget cuts and the costs associated with operating a small school." Del Oro, the district's alternative high school, has a total of 65 students and costs \$650,000 to operate annually.

Del Oro has provided an alternative education for students whose needs were not met at comprehensive schools. The school's closure will deeply impact students, who must now undergo a difficult transition into a new school or individual study plan, as well as teach-

ers and counselors.

Del Oro's co-principal, Rae Eckholm, remains strong and optimistic. In a letter to Del Oro parents after the meeting, Eckholm states, "Our students have been given challenges at Del Oro, which they met and even exceeded...now, we must ask them to take the challenge to make an adjustment to another school setting. But please, rest assured that they will not do this alone. Our motto of 'one kid at a time' will still apply. We will discuss educational options and will put together a transition plan that will best suit the needs of each student."

The closing of Del Oro was not the only difficult decision the Board had to make at the meeting. The Board also voted to reduce the number of teachers, counselors and classes offered in the district. Currently, 85% of the district's budget goes to personnel costs, making layoffs necessary in order to address the budget deficit. Approximately 67 employees will be receiving notices by March 15 with final notifications by May 15, 2010. In addition to these layoffs the number of periods a student may take and the variety of courses from which students can choose will be limited.

Students recently turned in their course choices for next year, without the benefit of a seventh period class and in the likelihood that they may not their first choice classes. In addition, popular extracurricular classes are likely to be cut. According to Associate Superintendent Chris Learned, "Leadership, journalism, and yearbook could all be high priority cuts. The AP (Advanced Placement) classes won't be entirely cut but they are likely to see significant reductions in class offerings."

Students from all of the

AUHSD schools came to the meeting to defend leadership, journalism, and AP courses. The students, including some seniors who will not be impacted by these changes, passionately argued the numerous educational benefits of the at-risk programs. The Board agreed with the students' points, but ultimately had to make decisions based on the financial capabilities of the Acalanes Union High School District.

In spite of the evening's somber decisions, there may yet be hope for the district. Learned explained, "The Governing Board approved calling a \$112 per parcel tax election for May 4, 2010. The parent clubs and foundations are working hard on obtaining donations. They provided \$800k this year to save counselors, librarians and leadership classes."

If approved, the parcel tax and the additional monies raised by parents could change the scenario, but for now the budget seems to have beaten the high school district; lay-off notices are being sent out and Del Oro will close at the end of this school year.

Del Oro High School

Del Oro High School was founded in 1967 to provide an alternative education for students that were not benefiting from the education provided at comprehensive high schools. In 2009 it was named a Model Continuation High School. California's Continuation High Schools were created in 1919 to focus on school-to-career education and provide an individualized space for students that are at risk of not graduating. Del Oro's largest graduating class was in 2008 with 40 seniors. Most Del Oro graduates go on to community college, 4-year colleges, the military, trade school, or full time work.

Acalanes Continues Decathlon Tradition

Submitted by Jonathan Lance, CCCOE



The Acalanes High School Academic Decathlon Team Photo Diane Morrell, CCCOE

Acalanes High School was announced as the overall team winner of the 2010 Contra Costa County Academic Decathlon at an awards ceremony on February 11th. This is Acalanes' fourth year in a row as the county's team winner. The top high school teams that followed Acalanes were, in order, Campolindo, Miramonte, and Pittsburg. This year's Top Overall Academic Decathlon Individual

Award went to Campolindo's Grace Ma.

The annual event, which was held over two consecutive Saturdays (January 30 and February 6), is directed by the Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE), along with the assistance of numerous community volunteers. Close to 150 participating students had been studying and preparing for this event with their

coaches since September.

The Academic Decathlon provides an opportunity for high school students to compete as individuals and teams in a series of ten academic tests and demonstrations including: art, economics, language and literature, mathematics, music, science, essay, interview, and speech (both prepared and impromptu). The curriculum for this year's event-ending team SuperQuiz was The French Revolution. Acalanes High School will represent Contra Costa County at the California Academic Decathlon that will be held in Sacramento March 12-15. Last year, the Lafayette high school was named as the overall Division III Team Winner in the California State Academic Decathlon. The National Academic Decathlon will be held in Omaha, Neb., April 21-24.

For more information go to www.cocoschools.org/supe/events/decathlon.htm.

Rheem Sings a Story

By Bonnie McNab



Rheem 1st graders sing with Kristin Jones Photo provided

The San Francisco Opera Guild has put together a program, under the direction of Jennifer Ashworth, called "Sing-A-Story" designed to bring opera directly into the classrooms of public and inner-city schools. The idea is to engage young chil-

dren directly both as audience and performers.

Sing-A-Story is managed by Caroline Altman, the Education Director at the San Francisco Opera Guild. She has expanded the program so they are now going to more than 250 classrooms a

year and have five Teaching Artists.

Kristen Jones, a long time singer and performer, has been with Sing-A-Story for five seasons. Last week she came to Rheem Elementary School in Moraga, to Ms. Strohmeyer's first grade class, to present Mozart's "The Magic Flute."

She first takes the children through the opera explaining the characters and story via action and song. They then are given the opportunity to perform the individual parts themselves under her expert guidance. Jones feels that by giving them a chance to get up and perform, a child who is not excelling in one area can have a chance to shine on "stage" in front of their peers. As music is a language that transcends all cultures and barriers, a bond is formed that can only strengthen the kinship in the classroom.

Family Focus

The Importance of Family Time for Teens

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

Anyone who has teenage children knows that parents' popularity takes a rather drastic dive during these years. We go from being the center of our darlings' universe when they're little, to the years of being well-tolerated and sometimes admired servers and providers, to the teen years of being regarded as slightly above plankton on the food chain.

Some parents make the mistake of letting their teens' pervasive silence, grumpiness, or outright disdain drive them away. They think something along the lines, "Well, if I'm not wanted, I'll take the hint and make myself scarce. Maybe in a few years my child will want more time together." A few times of being ordered to walk several body lengths behind her teen son when in public led to one friend's understandable desire to avoid putting herself in such a situation again.

A neighbor confided that her daughter asked her not to laugh when she was around her daughter's friends because she sounded like a donkey. The message seems to be, "Mom and Dad, avoid drawing attention to yourselves in any way at all times." Isn't this a fun period of time for parents? If your self-esteem is not firmly in place, this is the time for it to take a complete nose-dive.

In working with parents of teens, I urge them to resolve to hang in there and establish a presence, despite what can be overwhelming feelings of rejection. Many teens would love to spend the majority of their time with their peers. They have common interests, speak the same language, and provide each other with limitless fun, drama, and social education. But the truth is they need us, just as they need to eat vegetables and get enough sleep. As our teens become impacted by so many physical, emotional, academic, and social influences, their families can be a safe refuge. Even though they are forging their own identities and need to detach a bit from us emotionally, we are the constants in their lives during these years.

I suggest that parents not be deterred by initial poor attitudes of their teens toward family time. It is important to insist on regular family interaction, although there also needs to be flexibility in accommodating social needs and desires of your child as well. One essential point: The rationale you present for spending time together needs to be positive -- because you enjoy his company and miss being with him -- or something to that effect. Mandatory get-togethers, on a "because I said we're having family time" basis, tend not to produce desirable results.

Some examples of family time may include regular family dinners, game nights, bike rides, walks, hikes, volunteer activities, outings of all kinds, creative pursuits such as cooking together or playing music together, doing chores together such as painting a room or planting a vegetable garden. Allow your child to choose among activities and timing, and also to make his own suggestions as much as possible. We don't hesitate to do these activities with our children when they are young, and it is just as important to continue doing them when our children are older. Of course, time together with your teen will necessarily be more limited than when he was younger, but perhaps it is possible to expand on what you are already doing together.

Even if the family consists of two or three members, it is important to spend alone time together. Many parents compromise and agree to include friends of their children in this family time. This makes teens happiest, of course. But the idea of family alone time is not just about pleasing your teens; rather it is vital to continue building communication, common experiences, understanding, and fun into your relationship. So while it's wonderful to include your child's friends in your family activities at times, it's also important to carve out enough exclusive family time with your teen.

Research indicates that teens who lack significant parental contact fill this vacuum with peer and media influences and values. Unfortunately,

it sometimes takes children experiencing problems and requiring therapy before parents take a stand. It can be hard to find the fine line between imposing your will on your teen and gaining cooperation, but parents need to continue to try.

My practice is full of examples of how increased parental involvement helped a great deal in the healing process. Tyler, age fourteen, felt somewhat abandoned by his mom, a single parent who was preoccupied with her new boyfriend. Tyler came in for help with anxiety and depression. When we included some family therapy sessions, his mother was able to see how, despite his being withdrawn and seemingly uncaring, Tyler still needed regular contact with her for meals, activities, and the communication that was a natural part of spending time together.

Stacy was a sixteen year-old who had very little involvement with her parents or younger brother. She had her own car, a credit card, the usual electronic devices for communication, and evidently no desire for family relationships. Her parents both worked long hours and also traveled occasionally for work. They made no demands on Stacy, and no chores, curfew, family dinners, or family time. All they required was that she get good grades in school. And when she didn't, they dragged her in for therapy.

Stacy's parents were so out of touch with her that they had no idea who she hung out with or what she did in her free time. Unfortunately, she was sexually promiscuous, experimented with numerous drugs, including cocaine and mushrooms,

and had very little self-respect. While Stacy's parents thought they were doing her a favor by giving her freedom and what they thought were ingredients for happiness, she was actually suffering in silence.

After participating in family therapy, Stacy's parents were able to provide the structure and family involvement she had been lacking. Initially, of course, Stacy resisted all attempts to establish limits and expectations. But eventually she grew to enjoy the time her family spent together. She began to feel more worthwhile and deserving of good treatment from others and, most importantly, from herself.

So, difficult as it may be, try to ignore your teen's snarls or lack of enthusiasm when you initiate plans together. Making time with him a priority is ultimately one of the best gifts you can give him.



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a marriage and family therapist in Orinda and Walnut Creek. She can be reached at 925-376-9323 or margierie@yahoo.com

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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 03 Issue 25 Wednesday, February 17, 2010

Extreme Pizza Party

By Susie Iventosch



Raising Chickens on page 4



Maggie and Jack Keough have fun preparing pizza

Photos Doug Kohler

It's not every day you see a traditional wood-burning pizza oven in the suburban family kitchen. And, though it did not top the list of bells and whistles Katy and Mike Keough of Moraga expected to install in their newly remodeled kitchen, they're sure glad they did!

"It's been really fun," said Katy. "Everybody gets involved in the process and the kids have fun making their own pizzas."

Mike and Katy, who both enjoy cooking, have discovered that not only

can they cook pizza in the oven, but as the fire cools, the residual heat provides the perfect environment for slow-cooking beef brisket, short ribs or pot roast.

The pizza oven, heated by hard wood such as oak, heats up to 800°F in about 1.5 hours, and can cook a pizza in as little as 2-3 minutes, depending upon the thickness of the crust. The Keoughs have served pizza to a gathering as large as 40 people since getting their new pizza oven.

"We still have a lot of learning to do," Katy pointed out. "We're just get-

ting our feet wet, but would love to learn how to make breads and croissants in this oven."

According to Mike, the house had a massive, two-sided brick fireplace between the family and living rooms that didn't really serve much purpose.

"The few times we lit it, it did not throw off any heat," Mike said.

They were in a quandary, reluctant to dismantle the chimney only to leave a big hole in the roof and added costs in its wake, until Katy's cousin, a builder and draftsman, said, "You guys

should just fill that thing with fire bricks and cook pizzas in it!"

continued on page 6



Dana Green Presents... Two Reasons to Discover Lafayette!

Modern-Day Farmhouse

3576 Powell Drive, Lafayette

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Built in 2003, this 5BD/4BA, 4258 sq. ft. modern-day farmhouse features old fashioned appeal & charm! Wide-plank pine floors, 2 staircases, French doors, expansive windows, crown molding, high-end finishes & more! The 1-of-a-kind .59 acre level lot is surrounded by Oaks with wrap-around porch, brick fireplace & in-ground spa!

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

LAFAYETTE	Last reported: 6
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$329,500
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,600,000
MORAGA	Last reported: 5
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$435,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,036,000
ORINDA	Last reported: 2
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$800,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$900,000

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

- 627 Burton Drive, \$975,000, 4 Bdrms, 2071 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 1-20-10
- 3075 Camino Diablo, \$329,500, 2 Bdrms, 1253 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 1-20-10
- 868 Mountain View Drive, \$1,600,000, 4 Bdrms, 2185 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 1-20-10
- 3279 Mt. Diablo Court #21, \$427,000, 3 Bdrms, 1697 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 1-28-10
- 2079 Reliez Valley Road, \$775,000, 4 Bdrms, 1913 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 1-22-10
- 578 Silverado Drive, \$830,000, 2 Bdrms, 2240 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 1-20-10

MORAGA

- 1997 Ascot Drive #5, \$440,000, 3 Bdrms, 1728 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 1-21-10
- 31 Ascot Place, \$435,000, 2 Bdrms, 1379 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 1-21-10
- 1831 Joseph Drive, \$1,036,000, 4 Bdrms, 2818 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 1-27-10
- 235 Paseo Bernal, \$560,000, 3 Bdrms, 2018 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 1-14-10
- 1 Sierra Court, \$845,000, 3 Bdrms, 2005 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 1-26-10

ORINDA

- 282 Orchard Road, \$800,000, 4 Bdrms, 2006 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 1-15-10
- 16 Southwood Drive, \$900,000, 2 Bdrms, 1774 SqFt, 1939 YrBlt, 1-15-10

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

- 998 Hawthorne Drive, 94549, JP Morgan, 01-15-10, \$645,150, 1265 sf, 3 bd

MORAGA

- 79 Hardie Drive, 94556, Wells Fargo Bank, 01-12-10, \$116,654, 2286 sf, 4 bd
- 395 Redfield Place, 94556, JP Morgan, 01-08-10, \$967,203, 3082 sf, 4 bd

ORINDA

- 17 Kittiwake Road, 94563, US Bank, 01-08-10, \$787,793, 1719 sf, 4 bd
- 7 La Cuesta Road, 94563, JP Morgan, 01-11-10, \$1,170,000, 3792 sf, 5 bd
- 3 North Lane, 94563, Rww Properties, 01-08-10, \$648,000, 2496 sf, 3 bd
- 3 Stanton Ct, 94563, Washington Mutual Bank, 01-11-10, \$1,050,650, 1576 sf, 3 bd

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Chicken Workshops Sold Out

By Sophie Braccini



Papa John demonstrates how to set up a box for baby chicks Photo Sophie Braccini

John Kiefer, also known as Papa John, is a well-known figure of sustainable living in Lafayette. He often opens the doors of his beautiful property, by the Lafayette Branch of the Walnut Creek, to groups for their meetings. "I am the custodian of this place," says Kiefer, "it is my duty to share it with others." Along with the creek and pastoral setting, the garden conceals another treasure: a chicken coop. Kiefer shares that, too, not only supplying eggs to neighbors, but offering training for budding chicken enthusiasts. When news spread by word of mouth several weeks ago that Kiefer would hold a free chicken workshop, so many people responded that he had to add five additional sessions. "I stopped the registration when the number reached 105," he says, "who knew that so many people were interested in raising chickens in Lamorinda!"

"I went to the class to learn more about backyard chicken-raising. We are fairly new to the experience, having added chickens to our family just this past April," said Trish Barnes, one of the workshop participants, "we always planned to have them, and our kids are now old enough (9, 7 and 5) to help out and enjoy the experience."

The first part of the workshop, one recent Sunday morning, took place in the living room of the Lafayette home where Kiefer has been raising chickens for 40 years. The purpose was to arm participants with the knowledge and resources to start their coops come spring. "The best time to get your chicks is between mid February and the end of March," he stated, "so start building your coop now and you'll be ready to start within a month."

Kiefer advocates doing it all yourself. "Pre-made coops have a floor, that's dirty and not good for the chickens," he explained, "the best way is to build on the floor." Chickens like to scratch and dig, so having the coop on the dirt ensures that they will create healthy manure by digging and turning the soil of their home. Kiefer harvests the fertilizer from time to time for his vegetable garden and his trees.

Chicks are normally only a few days old when purchased, so Kiefer also taught participants how to build a box in which the chicks can be raised until they are big enough to be transferred to the coop. It seemed doable, with a heavy cardboard box, a lamp for heat and raised bowls for water and feed.

Building the coop, on the other hand, is not an easy week-end project. It requires the digging of a trench to set the chicken wire that will protect the flock from predators, raising wood walls, a door, the construction of a nesting box, installation of a water source and a roof. "At the end of the first workshop a lady asked, 'who's going to build my coop?'" recalled Kiefer. "I hadn't thought about that, but I contacted Siamack Sioshansi of the Urban Farmers project and now we can recommend two individuals who can do it for you," he added.

Kiefer also presented a lot of information about where to find the chicks, the feed and facts about eggs as well.

More than half of the participants in the workshop were from Lafayette.

... continued on page 11



Chickens need to eat plenty of greens

Photo Sophie Braccini



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Extreme Pizza Party

... continued from page 1



The Keough's old fireplace was demolished

This started the ball rolling. Mike began researching pizza ovens and along with the help of his contractor and neighbor Pat Geoghegan (Peralta Construction), who consulted with pizza restaurants in San Francisco's North Beach district, they eventually found the perfect oven model for the existing "fireplace" footprint. They decided upon a Forno Bravo oven through a Santa Rosa area distributor because it seemed to best fit the footprint, pricing expectations and shipping options. The cost of the unit runs approximately \$2,500 before installation.

"When the oven was shipped, it came in pieces so we could get it into the house," Katy said. "It was 'Guy Heaven' and Pat and Mike set about installing the unit. They really enjoyed the project."

Geoghegan says a pizza oven is a spe-



Building the pizza oven

cial application that you rarely see indoors—even in kitchens that have all the cool toys.

"You see 75 percent of these ovens in outdoor kitchens, because it's easier for the heat to escape," he noted. "The internal temperature of these ovens is upwards of 800°F and indoors it requires stainless steel triple walled lining and a special mortar due to this intense heat."

Geoghegan described the heat shield as a space-age like material that is very thin, but can withstand temperatures of 1,200°F. It wraps the oven "kind of like a blanket." The drywall on the back side of unit is actually cool to the touch, because of the efficient insulation.

"This was my favorite part of the three bathroom/kitchen remodel," Geoghegan

Photos Pat Geoghegan

said. "I don't know too many people who have installed an oven like this."

For those concerned about the California wood-burning stove regulations that limit particulate matter emissions, this stove emits very few particulates due to the fact it burns so hot. In addition, wood-burning stoves used for the purpose of food preparation are exempt from this regulation. For more information, please visit: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/DRDB/SAC/CURHTML/R417.PDF>.

The Keoughs received "Molina Caputo Tips 00 Pizza Flour" and recipes along with their oven accessories. They like the pizza dough recipe and have really enjoyed using this flour, but they have also used all-purpose flour.

"Though they are both great, the pizza crust made with Molina Caputo flour has a noticeably more delicate texture and it is puffer," said Katy. "We have also purchased pizza dough from Chow's in Lafayette. You can call and order ahead and that makes it easy for a big pizza party!"

Contractor

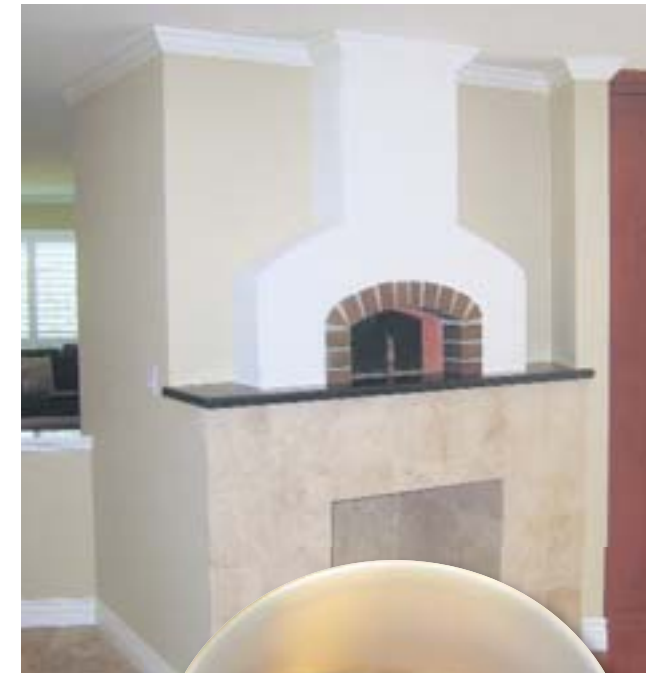
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Finished!



Pizza dough

Photo Susie Iventosch

Forno Bravo Authentic Vera Pizza Napoletana Dough Recipe Ingredients

By Volume

- 4 cups Molino Caputo Tipo 00 flour
- 1 1/2 cups, plus 2 TBL water
- 2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp dry active yeast

By Weight

- 500gr Molino Caputo Tipo 00 flour
- 325gr water (65% hydration)
- 10gr salt
- 3gr active dry yeast

We highly recommend cooking by weight. It is fast, and easy to get the exact hydration (water to flour ratio) and dough ball size you want. Personally, I do not use recipes or a mixing cup when I cook dinner for the family, but pizza and bread dough is different. Being exact counts and nothing works better than a digital scale. Mix the dough in a stand mixer, by hand or in a bread machine. If you are using a stand mixer, mix it slowly for two minutes, faster for 5 minutes, and slow again for 2 minutes. Cover the dough and let it rise for 1 1/2 - 2 hours, or until double. Punch it down and push out the air bubbles. Form the dough into a large ball. Then cut it into 4-5 equal pieces.



Mike Keough slides a pizza into the hot oven

Photo Doug Kohen

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Please Your Palate Pizza

Makes four small (8 inch) pizzas

By Susie Iventosch

Crust

- 1 cup warm water
(about 100-115 degrees on a thermometer, or warm to the touch)
- 1 package active dry yeast (or 2 ¼ teaspoons)
- 2 to 3 cups all purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon sea salt or kosher salt

Combine water and yeast in large bowl. Gently whisk to blend in yeast. Add 1 cup flour, salt and olive oil and mix well. Add enough remaining flour to make soft dough. (You may need more or less flour, so add it gradually.) Turn dough out onto a floured board or cloth and knead until dough is smooth and elastic, about five minutes. Transfer dough to a clean, greased bowl and cover with a slightly damp kitchen towel. Let rise in warm place (not the oven) for about one hour or until doubled in size.

When dough has risen, divide into the number of pizzas you plan to make. If you want four pizzas, then make four small balls. For two larger pizzas, make two balls. If you prefer appetizer size pizzas, make eight balls. Cover dough with a towel and let rest for 10 to 15 minutes. Then dough will be ready to roll out and top.

Preheat pizza stone or heavy baking pan for 15 minutes in 450-degree oven.

Roll out dough and place on wooden or plastic cutting board, or pizza paddle. (Make sure there is a little extra flour under pizza rounds and sprinkle one tablespoon cornmeal underneath, as well. This will help to slide pizza onto baking surface.)

On top of the dough spread sauce, sprinkle grated mozzarella cheese and decorate pizza with your favorite toppings. Slide pizza with spatula onto pizza stone or baking sheet that has been greased with olive oil, or cooking spray and sprinkled with cornmeal. (We use an extra set of clean hands to help lift pizza onto baking surface.) Bake in preheated 450-degree oven 10 to 15 minutes, or until desired doneness.

Sauce

- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon Italian herbs (or whatever fresh herbs you like – fresh minced basil adds a nice touch.)
- 2 tablespoons red wine
- 1 12-ounce can tomato paste
- Salt and pepper to taste

Mix all of the above. Spread over pizza dough.



Homemade pizza

Photo Susie Iventosch

Topping Ideas

My family likes pizza with goat cheese, pine nuts, Greek olives, red bell pepper, roasted tomatoes, marinated artichoke hearts, and fresh mozzarella. It's fun to make for company, so that everyone can add their own toppings. For these events it is good to have the old standbys such as mushrooms, black olives, pepperoni, Canadian bacon, sausage and pineapples. Here are a few other topping ideas:

- Montrachet goat cheese (spread on dough before the pizza sauce)
- Pesto sauce (same as above)
- Fresh mozzarella cheese sliced
- Grated mozzarella
- Pine nuts
- Sautéed sliced or chopped red onions
- Roasted tomatoes (slice tomatoes, sprinkle with extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper and roast in 400 degree oven for 10 to 15 minutes.)
- Kalamata Greek olives, sliced or chopped
- Ripe black olives, sliced or chopped
- Sundried tomatoes, julienned
- Julienned red bell pepper
- Marinated artichoke hearts, cut into quarters
- Sliced mushrooms
- Pepperoni
- Canadian bacon
- Pineapple chunks

These recipe is available on our web site. Go to: www.lamorindaweekly.com Susie can be reached at suziven@gmail.com

Pizza's Past



Katy Keough's topping for Pizza Margherita: red tomato, white mozzarella cheese and green basil.

Photo Doug Kohen

Although pizza has undergone a process of evolution over the centuries, it is most certainly the Mediterranean cultures that deserve credit for creating it. Historical records indicate that ancient Egyptians had a custom of celebrating the Pharaoh's birthday with flat bread seasoned with herbs, and Herodotus, a Greek historian described Babylonian recipes that are very similar to contemporary pizza crust.

Pizza took its current form in pre-Renaissance Naples. Poor peasants used their limited ingredients (wheat flour, olive oil, lard, cheese and herbs) to make seasoned flat bread garnished with cheese. In the 1800s an Italian baker, Raffaele Esposito, was believed to have created a dish for visiting royalty. To impress King Umberto and Queen Margherita, who were touring the

area, Signore Esposito chose to top the flat bread with food that would best represent the colors of Italy: red tomato, white mozzarella cheese and green basil.

Mozzarella cheese was one benefit of an invasion from Asian peoples, who brought the water buffalo to Italy. Still today, the best mozzarella is made from water buffalo milk.

Neapolitan pizza is widely regarded as the best in the world, probably due to the fresh ingredients available to pizzerias in Naples: herbs, garlic, and tomatoes grown in the rich volcanic ash of Mt. Vesuvius and fresh mozzarella from water buffalo milk.

Today pizza is about as American as baseball and apple pie, as witnessed by the 100 acres of pizza eaten each day in the U.S.

Other sources:

- <http://allthingspizzablog.blogspot.com/2007/10/all-things-pizza-pizza-fun-facts.html>
- <http://www.pizzandgarlicbread.com/pizza-fun-facts.aspx>
- http://www.inmamaskitchen.com/FOOD_IS_ART/pizzahistory.html

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Pizza Ponderings

By Susie Iventosch

October is National Pizza Month. It was first so designated in 1987 and continues to be the traditional time for celebration of one of America's most important and popular food industries.

Americans eat approximately 100 acres of pizza EACH DAY, or about 350 slices per second.

Pizza is a \$32+ BILLION per year industry.

There are approximately 61,269 pizzerias in the United States. (Source: American Business Lists, Omaha, Nebraska.)

Each man, woman and child in America eats an average of 46 slices (23 pounds) of pizza per year. (Source: Packaged Facts, New York.)

Approximately 3 BILLION pizzas are sold in the U.S. each year.

Pepperoni is America's favorite topping (36% of all pizza orders). We eat approximately 251,770,000 pounds of pepperoni per year. Other



Pepperoni, America's favorite topping
popular pizza toppings are: mushrooms, extra cheese, sausage, green pepper and onions.

Gourmet toppings are gaining ground in some areas of the country such as chicken, oysters, crayfish, dandelions, sprouts, eggplant, Cajun shrimp, artichoke hearts and tuna. More recent trends include game meats such as venison, duck and Canadian bacon.

Around the world, toppings vary greatly, reflecting regional tastes and preferences. Australians enjoy shrimp and pineapple, as well as bar-

beque toppings on their pies. Costa Ricans favor coconut and in Pakistan, curry is a favorite. (Source: Numero Uno Pizzeria.)

Some of the more popular international toppings in India are pickled ginger, minced mutton and "paneer" (a form of cottage cheese) which looks quite like tofu but is obviously a dairy product. Tandoori chicken and chicken "tikka" are also increasingly popular toppings in India. (Thanks to Shiv Sharan Singh from New Delhi, India, for this contribution.)

Squid and Mayo Jaga (mayonnaise, potato and bacon) are popular toppings in Japan and green peas in Brazil. In Russia, they serve pizza covered with mockba—a combination of sardines, tuna, mackerel, salmon and onions. In France, a popular combo is called the Flambé, with bacon, onion and fresh cream. (Source: Domino's.)



Chef Maggie tops pizza while brother Jack snags a taste of cheese

Photo Doug Kohen

Chicken Workshops Sold Out

... continued from page 4



Workshop participants roam the chicken run and check Papa John's chicken coop Photo Sophie Braccini

According to Kiefer a significant portion of them will actually build a coop. "Some ask questions, others return for further examination of the coop, so it is clear they are moving forward. Some had made their decision to build a coop before attending the workshop. My estimate is 40 - 60% will build and have fresh eggs," says Kiefer.

Some participants found out at the workshop that their chicken dreams might crash against the wall of the city's regulations. "I learned during the workshop that my lot was too small to have chickens," says Rebecca Calahan-Klein, a Lafayette resident with about a third of an acre property, "We are building a front yard fruit garden, a vegetable garden for our family and neighbors and wanted to have chickens to round out our ecosystem."

In Lafayette the rules for keeping farm animals are set according to the zoning district. The closer to downtown you are, the less likely it is that you will be allowed to keep poultry. For example, the owner of a 1-acre lot in a dense neighborhood (R-10, R-12 and R-15 districts) may not be allowed to keep hens, while a resident with the same acreage will not need a permit if they live in a R-40 zone. (If chickens are in your future, it would be a good idea to check with your local Planning Department first.)

Kiefer says he plans to reach out to the city and try to help residents with smaller lots, and to work toward a change in the regulations. Calahan-Klein will participate in this effort, "In the suburbs we have a way of living together that's respectful and friendly to neighbors," she says, "Lafayette has great capacity to look at a question like this and find a way to make it work for everyone involved."

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Spacious home w/nice light & vaulted ceilings. Shows beautifully w/new Berber style cpt, spacious mstr suite. Pvt location backs to open space. Pretty views too.

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9 Ross Drive

All charm & curb appeal! Updated, sunny, open flr plan w/great indoor/outdoor flow. Dbl pane windows/doors & wood floors thru most of home. Grassy yards, pool.

Offered at \$839,000

MORAGA



113 Merion Terrace

Updated & beautifully maintained + many custom features. 3bd/ den/ofc, light/bright kit w/brkfst nook, pvt yd is gardener's delite. Backs to nature on quiet cul de sac.

Offered at \$899,000

MORAGA



1018 Del Rio Way

5bd/2.5ba, 2506 sq. ft. updated St. Mary's Gardens rancher w/hdwd flrs, high ceiling, granite kit, flat .23 ac yd w/lawn, patio, bb hoop. Mstr retreat w/Jacuzzi tub.

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LAFAYETTE



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Three bedrooms plus an office on fully landscaped .5 acre. Remodeled kitchen w/stainless appl, spa-like master bath. Move in condition! www.thekaufmans.com

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996 Hawthorne Drive

Charming, tastefully updated approx. 1200 sq ft hm with sep 350 sq ft guest house. Fab home for entertaining, new remod kitchen, lush landscaping, near trail, town, schools.

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3575 Springhill Road

Remodeled 3bd/2ba sgl lvl home on lovely .75 ac oak studded lot. New kitchen, hdwd flrs & dual panes. Very special pvt setting surrounded by natural beauty. Lafayette's schools!

Offered at \$799,000

LAFAYETTE



1199 Monticello

Happy Valley Glen custom home on beautiful pvt .5 ac lot. Large fam rm w/adj kitchen. Wall of glass doors that open to yard. Great floor plan, great neighborhood, close to Bart.

Offered at \$1,195,000

LAFAYETTE



1190 Brown Avenue

Truly unique, pvt & beaut home built in 2000 on gorgeous view lot. 5bd/4ba, Chef's granite/ stainless kitchen, dual panes, vaulted beamed ceilings, decks, pvt lower lvl bd/bath w/sep entrance.

Offered at \$1,280,000

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3454 Sky Lane

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Offered at \$1,289,000

LAFAYETTE



3498 Springhill Court

Charming 3000 sf Craftsman-style 4bd/3ba on lvl .57 ac lot down small court. Lovingly remod & updated, hdwd & stone flrs, dual panes, chef's kitchen, separate cottage.

Offered at \$1,498,000

LAFAYETTE



3670 Happy Valley Road

Happy Valley Gem! Beautifully built & maintained estate setting. 1+ac with pvt lane. Walls of glass, open floor plan, cabana, separate workshop & potting shed.

Offered at \$1,900,000

LAFAYETTE



4055 Happy Valley Road

Happy Valley New England classic new in 2000. Designed & built to perfection on fab pvt lg lvl .94 ac estate. Kit/fam rm w/barn-style vaulted ceiling, french drs, pool.

Offered at \$3,800,000

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