



Independent, locally owned and operated!

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published March 3rd, 2010

Lafayette Library and Learning Center Reaches Out to Seniors

By Lou Fancher

The power of a library lies in its ability to attract and stimulate the public. The new Lafayette Library and Learning Center (LLLC) has been open long enough for Lamorindans to have admired its books, movies, computers, story times, Consortium-partnered events, Community Hall, and breathtaking atmosphere. Less well-known is its focus on generational programming. Senior citizens, currently 30% of the library's visitors and growing, are beginning to discover that behind the sparkling new edifice lies the intimacy of a small-town neighborhood and the global outreach of a Fortune 500 company.

Exactly how this is achieved has a lot to do with Susan Weaver, Senior Community Library Manager, Kathy Merchant, President of the Library Foundation, Marechal Duncan, who sits on numerous Lafayette civic boards and committees, and countless individuals working tirelessly and creatively behind the stacks. "We heard from so many seniors that this was the first time they'd set foot in a library since 1960, or before," says Weaver. If novelty and opening week celebrations brought more seniors to the library, it's research that has caused them to return.

Traveling to libraries all over the East Bay prior to the LLLC's debut, Duncan kept a mental must-have list. "We had to have some places for seniors to come and read the paper," he begins. This meant space-room to read-and easy access to current information, all of which the LLLC has in abundance.

Lest he places too much emphasis on the picture of seniors submerged on sofas behind copies of the daily news, Duncan rapidly turns the conversation to computers.

Learning about the internet is huge with the over-65 demographic. Weaver calls computer services "the second big wow," after the increased spaces to read. Adult Services Librarian Helen Anderson's computer workshops are so popular, they are becoming a regular feature on the calendar. Participants learn how to set up email accounts, post photos, and master other basic internet functions. For a population born before the advent of the PC and cell phones, it's a low-key training center, providing connections to family, friends, and a world which may be otherwise out of reach.

Expanding the social interactions of all age groups is attractive, but especially for the elderly. "We call this a community living room," Merchant says, offering a cozy description. "It's bringing so many things together," Duncan adds. He is on the board of the Lafayette Historical Society and can't say enough about the organization's new digs. "Our archives were in bedrooms and garages before this," he says. Now, with room to grow, he dreams of vocal histories-possibly including his own fifty-four years-worth-finding a forum and a home.

Literally bringing the elderly into the library is still a work-in-progress. "I think the building, as impressive as it is, is a little intimidating," Merchant says. For seniors, accessibility is number one. The 88 parking spaces, 2-hour on-street parking and seed money for developing community transportation is just enough to wet Merchant's appetite for more. She, along with Duncan and members of the Lafayette Senior Liaison Committee, had the thought, "Why don't we have a seminar down here? We invite seniors, their caregivers, and their support service providers, and have docents take small groups around the library." Their brainstorming sparked a plan: coordinating with the Lafayette Senior Services Center (LSSC) and the Rossmoor community to pair tours with events. "By having these orientations, there's an increased comfort level," Merchant explains.

To achieve the grand schemes and dreams of Weaver, Merchant, Duncan et.al., the LLLC needs an army of volunteers. Half of the current 40 volunteers are seniors. As the highest circulating library in the county, the library depends on them to shelve and pull materials. Integrating seniors into the Homework Center is next on Weaver's list: with recently retired professionals mentoring young adults, and teens tutoring seniors on Facebook, Twitter and the like. Once that is up and running, Weaver hopes to raise funds directed towards additional assistive technology: rolling carts for books, handheld electronic "readers," and close-captioned televisions.

For a massive undertaking like the LLLC, the organization must have deep roots. Weaver's hard-working staff, the library foundation's compelling mission and an extensive team of community volunteers all add up to one thing: a library for the ages for readers of all ages. Selected Upcoming Events Sponsored by the Glenn Seaborg Learning Consortium

Thurs. Mar. 4, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Consortium Partner: JFK University

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

Free; audience: Teens, Adults. Email consortium@lafayettelib.com

Wed. Mar. 17, 7:30-9:00 p.m.

Consortium Partner: Oakland Museum

CALIFORNIA ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT Explore the evolution of this 20th

Century art form with Associate Curator Julie Muniz. Community Hall at LLLC

Free; appropriate for teens and adults. Email consortium@lafayettelib.com

Thurs. Mar. 18, 5:30 p.m. check-in, 6:30 p.m. program

Consortium Partner: 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.

Veterans Memorial Building, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Appropriate for teens and adults.

Tickets: 415- 597-6705 or commonwealthclub.org

Questions? Call (925) 283-6513. For calendar updates, visit lafayettelib.com.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA