

Acalanes High School • Bentley School • Burton Valley • Camino Pablo Campolindo • Contra Costa Jewish Day School • Del Rey Donald L. Rheem • Glorietta • Happy Valley • Joaquin Moraga

Lamorinda Schools

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

Miramonte Principal Reflects and Looks Forward

By Lou Fancher



Miramonte Principal Adam Clark with students Robert Fluegge and Jason Lammert

Photo provided

If Adam Clark's first year as principal at Orinda's Miramonte High School was all about getting to know the students, faculty and parents, his second is about standing out.

"I'm out there," he says, naming his primary approach to directing the school's future. "If it's lunch time, I'm out there. In the morning, at all sports events and performances, after school—I'm out there. If you ask the students, they'll say, 'He's everywhere.'"

That physical presence means Clark knows his teachers struggle with the perennial lack of time and ever-changing student population. He sees the kids who slide to the edge of academic and

social acceptability. He hears the community complaints of favoritism to athletes. He speaks with passion to parents, Rotary clubs, city administrators and the media about Miramonte's student body.

Clark's first year has not been a clichéd bed of roses. Or, if it has, alcohol abuse, a tragic death and ongoing efforts to curtail risky behavior are the thorns in his side.

"The first issue, a huge issue here," Clark says, "was dealing with alcohol violations at weekend parties." After the death of one student last year, the Miramonte Healthy Choices Committee arranged an alcohol awareness forum, attended by Orinda Police Chief Bill French, Clark, and a

panel of legal and medical experts, to better inform parents and the community about the issue.

"Obviously, in high school, you're going to have risky behavior," Clark says. In response to subsequent accusations that athletes were allowed a separate, more-lenient code of conduct after the tragic incident, Clark stepped up his intervention. "I started working with athletes: mentoring them, holding meetings, speaking with them on their turf about how alcohol abuse can derail what we are trying to accomplish here."

Clark says school policy for first offenders is serious: suspension, which can be reduced only by attendance at 5-6 meetings with school crisis counselors and the student's parents. Last year, Clark reports that less than ten violations occurred. Of those, approximately fifty percent of the students did not repeat, meaning, to him, the intervention is successful. For repeat offenders, Clark says the police are called, the student is suspended, and the sessions with crisis counselors, while still required, do not reduce the student's suspension.

"But even if we have a kid who's fallen off the deep end, they're not just cast away," Clark promises. "My administration and I find those kids. We talk about those kids. We keep an eye out."

Asked about an alleged on-campus assault of a female student by a male student this summer, Clark says his understanding is that, since the male student is no longer enrolled at Miramonte, the school is not charged with addressing the specific incident. He calls the subject—sexual or physical violations—"serious," and states his belief that "invoking a student body that really cares about this place," is the solution.

Miramonte is not all about drama and drugs. Most of the time, Clark says, it's about aca-

ademic excellence and achievement. Last year, he learned "how engaging the students are—they're not only concerned about their own needs, but generally interested in me." He's moved by the fact that, when advising them about college, they ask him, "Where'd you go to school?" His proactive approach, developed as a middle school principal, has had immediate results. "My first couple of weeks on the job, I could tell. You know, kids are intuitive, often more than adults are, and they really know if you're genuine," he says. "Their reaction to me was the opposite of push back. It was *push in*."

Orinda, unquestionably an affluent community, isn't an excuse for Clark to settle into complacency. "Listen," he says, leaning forward intently, "we have kids going to Ivy League schools and kids to trade schools. All are equally important and my concern is that no students cut themselves short."

In an increasingly competitive academic environment, Clark will rely on two primary devices to distinguish the school. The first is future-thinking: technology. "We're on the cutting edge," he says. "We need to embrace how our kids learn and go with that."

Staff training is essential to the successful integration of technology into the classroom. Clark says the school is supporting the teachers' acquisition of knowledge and all departments have their own websites. And for students without cell phones or laptops of their own, the library is open extended hours and technol-

ogy devices can be checked out on loan.

At the end of the day, and likely at the start, Clark relies on a second tool for leading Miramonte: personal history. "Since the third grade, I've always worked. I've done a bunch of jobs, and while doing them, it hit me: I need to learn. I need credentials or certificates to do the kind of work I want to do." Forming a link be-

tween school success and his future, he developed concepts that lead him to go outside, amidst the students, at every opportunity. "My grandfather," he says, "he was a brilliant engineer. He always told me, 'Don't close any doors. Once they're closed, you're going to have a hard time opening them up again.' So that's what I tell these kids. Don't close any doors."



ORINDA ACADEMY
PARENTS, STUDENTS & TEACHERS WORKING TOGETHER

College Prep • Grades 7-12 • Small Classes

OPEN HOUSE

FOR PROSPECTIVE PARENTS AND STUDENTS
1-4 OCT. 30 & DEC. 12

19 Altarinda Rd., Orinda, CA 94563
925.254.7553 • www.OrindaAcademy.org

Limited Fall Openings

Room for Rent!

Jeepeers, Peepers, Save us from the Creepers! Part 2

By Cynthia Brian

You own a second home, townhome, or condo which your twenty-something son is living in while he finishes grad school. He loves living alone, but the rent he's paying you can't cover the mortgage. In this recessionary economy, refinancing is out of the question because the bank says the area is "upside down." Instead of foreclosing, you decide to rent out a room. Both of you determine that the most desirable tenant would be a twenty-thirty something single male, non-smoker, gainfully employed, with no pets who is respectful, quiet, and not interested in bringing the party home. The free classifieds are the perfect place to find that perfect person. Or...are they?

It only takes a few navigational minutes to discover that posting an ad is fraught with peril. Forewarned is forearmed and it's not always what you think. As a caring mom who owns a beautifully designed and maintained townhouse in a college town, I enjoy renting to discretionary students. Before I post an ad anywhere, I know the rules. The Federal Fair Housing laws prohibit discriminatory advertising, regardless of how small or large the property. This means that I cannot advertise for a student, twenty-thirty something single male, non-smoker, gainfully employed because that would discriminate against non-students, women, couples, families, the aged, and the unemployed. California laws, where I reside, prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, ancestry, familial status, source of income, disability, or age (CA GOVT § 12955). Every state has specific rules and we are wise to learn them.

There are exemptions. If the living situation requires shared bathroom, kitchens, or common room facilities, the homeowner may express a preference based on gender or sexual orientation. Another exception is when the owner lives in the home, the number and sex of occupants desired may be stated.

Once you've mapped the minefield of writing a legally acceptable ad, it's time to sift through the responses, many of which may prove to be scams. Here is an actual on-line posting with the name and city changed.

"I am a 30 yr old professional male moving to the area next week. My office is in San Diego so I would like something close by.

Just received work promotion making about 95K a year. I need an apartment or townhouse to share and yours sounds exactly right. My issue is I had a mortgage company in N. CA and lost everything, so my credit is shot. I'll pay you in cash.

I am heading down from San Francisco on Monday and could move in next week. Can we meet? Thanks, John"

What's wrong with this response? Although John could be for real, his initial correspondence shares too much information regarding his income and credit status. Wanting to pay in cash is a flaming red flag. He doesn't sound thirty or professional, and most likely would not pass a background check. Delete!

Here are a few helpful hints to protect you as you write your Room for Rent ad and schedule interviews.

- Know the rules of your state for landlords.
- Remain anonymous by not giving out exact street address in your ad. Cross streets allow the good guys to know the area you

are in while keeping your exact location protected.

- Hide your email address from readers and have the site forward emails to you.
- Provide four or more quality photos without people or recognizable street identification in them.
- Do not show links to other postings
- Click no preference on gender unless you are renting according to FHA exemptions.
- Conduct a phone interview, letting the person know that a copy of his driver's license is required.
- Ask for more information before meeting in person and send any pertinent rules for the home.
- Always have another person with you when you do meet the potential renter
- Have a renter application ready
- Require a credit and/or background check paid by the renter.
- Do not accept money orders, traveler's checks, or cashier's checks.
- Do not give out your bank information for money transfers from out of the country accounts.
- Trust your gut.

If you feel uncomfortable going this alone, there are realty companies that offer rental services for a fee. There are creepers crawling the web and the classified want ads seeking volunteers to be victims. Don't become one of them. If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is false. There are many outstanding and up-standing individuals looking for your specific location. The more diligent and specific you are in penning your post, the more successful...and safe you and your loved ones will be.

May you find the ideal tenant and save your home in the process.



Bottomley Equestrian

innovative horsemanship classes & workshops
children & adults year-round

small classes, individual attention, certified instructors
well-trained, well-cared-for horses

www.bottomleyequestrian.com

925.228.3766

convenient to lamorinda

Advertising

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

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

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

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

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

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

to hear Gerna speak. He is teaching his class 'How to Give Your Kid a 4-Year College Education Without Going Broke!' on Wednesday September 29th at the Moraga Library located at 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga, CA 94556 from 6:30pm-8pm.

"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 October and November 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.