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Moraga Expands Recreation Programs

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Kim Burrowes, Jay Ingram and KimbZerly Nelson at the Hacienda Photo Sophie Braccini

When he presented his request to the Moraga Town Council for a second full-time employee, Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram argued that by increasing the currently half-time position to full-time, his department would be able to offer more interesting recreation opportunities to Moraga residents. As promised, the spring 2011 Activities Guide will offer many new opportunities for all ages, and supports a Town and Gown collaboration to further captivate and educate.

"Having Kim (Burrowes) work full-time has allowed us to improve research and plan activities for our constituency," explains Ingram. The request for a full-time recreation assistant came first from the Moraga Movers, who had donated a Senior Van to the town, but needed to have someone available to plan the trips and drive the bus. This winter and spring there are a couple of trips planned each month; the Movers will go all over the Bay Area, from Filoli to San Francisco, Safari West, and Thunder Valley Casino. "If we had a volunteer driver, we could do even more," hints Ingram.

Children will also benefit from the expanded staffing. "For the first time we are proposing winter and spring camps, and this summer we will have a new option - Summer Play for 8-12 years old, a new

formula that's very affordable and flexible for parents." A full menu of birthday parties is also offered, and a children's Triathlon is in the planning phase.

Adults are not forgotten; classes include Supervised Bridge, which puts intermediate players in advanced strategy situations; dog obedience classes by Bonnie Brown-Cali, who was recommended by the Lamorinda Dogs group; Bringing Nutrition to the Table, an 8-week series on optimizing eating habits for the whole family; and more.

A new feature in the Activities Guide is the inclusion of Saint Mary's College's (SMC) Lifelong Learning classes. "Chris Sindt, Associate Dean for Graduate and Professional Programs, and I worked on expanding our program," said Grete Stenersen, Lifelong Learning Director, "we met with Rob Lucacher, who was on the School of Liberal Arts Advisory Board and Moraga Parks and Recreation Commission and he recommended we partner with Jay Ingram."

The program developed by the Saint Mary's team more than doubles the classes previously offered. "The ideas for the classes came from many different angles," explains Stenersen, "for example, we created the Comparative Religions course after a resident called us and asked for it Stenersen said it was very easy to find professors and instructors who were willing to teach such classes as Cosmology, A Cosmic Voyage: A Sophisticate's Primer for the History of the World; Four Seasons Natural Gardening; The Philosophy of Wine; and Opera Appreciation.

Ingram included the SMC courses in the Parks and Rec publication at no cost to the college; the partnership makes it worthwhile. For example, "We needed a wood floor to teach our new spring Zumba class and the college has provided it for us, free of charge," said Ingram. The Town is working on a computer class that will take place at Saint Mary's; the college will also provide the instructor.

For now, Lifelong Learning is not turning a profit for SMC. "It is a window for the College," said Stenersen, "we want to open our doors wide to the surrounding communities. We believe that continuing education is part of the mission of the College, its Liberal Arts teaching and Lasallian Tradition."

The Activity Guide will be mailed 1st week of December.

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