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## Famous Tree Takes a Break

By Sophie Braccini



Last year's lights on the tree in front of Diablo Foods Photo Andy Schreck

Every November the proud redwood tree that stands in front of Diablo Foods lights up for the holidays. But not this year. Ar-

borist Thomas Raeth of Lafayette Tree and Landscape, who has been taking care of the tree for 20 years, advised the Stokes family to give

the tree some room to breathe, and not turn on the bright garland of lights enjoyed by passersby over the last several seasons.

"We were told that the tree was stressed and needed more oxygen," says Connie Collier, daughter of Diablo Foods founder Ed Stokes, "so we dug up the asphalt around the trunk to increase the size of the bed, aerated the dirt around the roots and fertilized it." The garland, which has lain amongst the branches for seven years, was removed.

"What happens with a tree is that when something stays on it for a long period of time, the tree tends to try to incorporate it," said Raeth, "I saw signs that the tree was trying to 'digest' the wire and that could become dangerous. Additionally, the tree needed an extended footprint to continue to be healthy."

As the asphalt was removed from around the trunk, Raeth discovered a deep ring of concrete

that was choking the tree down to its root system. "It took two days to remove it," says Raeth, "but now, with the new planter, we've been able to inoculate mycorrhiza fungi and nutrients in the root system and we anticipate seeing some healthy growth from that tree."

"It's sad not to see the tree lit, but its health comes first," states Collier, "this is a landmark and we want to take good care of it." Although the Stokes family does not own the building or the parking lot, Collier says that they feel a sense of responsibility toward the tree.

"Next year we'll take out the dead wood, lightly prune it, and we'll be able to string new lights," says Raeth. He's expecting new white LED lights from Germany to be available next year, which will be "energy saving, longer lasting and less heat generating," adds Raeth's wife Tamara. "We are looking forward to lighting it again next year," said Collier.

## Yoga for Seniors, by a Senior

By Cathy Dausman



Charlie Bonney's Santa-esque beard is seasonal; he vows to shave it off come January. Photo Cathy Dausman



"Seniors? And yoga? Well, why not?!" Charlie Bonney designed a special half-dance, half-yoga class for the over 50 crowd beginning in January at Moraga's Hacienda de las Flores. Bonney, whose students sometimes call him "Swami Charlie," sees the importance of body movement as a way to keep joints open and arthritis and rheumatism at bay. "At 32 I couldn't touch

my toes," he said when he took up Ashtanga, a fast-paced yoga in Hawaii. To maintain flexibility in knees, elbows, back and other joints, Bonney maintains a "move it or lose it" philosophy. He credits yoga for doing the trick. A senior now himself (he's 67) he wants to teach a discipline that is kind to other seniors.

So Bonney starts slowly, with gentle dance movements

in the first hour, playing a mix of '50's and '60's rock and roll ("imagine you are a teen again,") and classical music to build body heat. The second hour is yoga composed of slow posture movements. The aim is to slow down, get a good stretch but stop before it becomes painful, he says.

Leather soles glued to lace-up walking shoes or sneakers offer best support and proper

glide; a shoe repair shop should be able to do the work. Students will also need a 5/8 or 3/4 inch thick yoga mat and leotards.

Classes start January 5 and run eight consecutive Wednesdays, from 10 a.m. to noon. Registration is by phone (925) 888-7045, online www.moraga.ca.us; or walk-in. The Hacienda de las Flores is at 2100 Donald Drive; on-site parking is available.

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