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## Uh-Oh, Here Come More Scrooges!

By Cathy Dausman



From left, back row: Dave Pinkham, Sara Steenhouse, Ted DeAtley; front: Ben Fraticelli  
Photo Cathy Dausman

Just what the world needs—more Scrooges at Christmas! But Director David Pinkham gleefully points out that while most plays feature a single Scrooge, “we’ve got five!”

The Lafayette resident, along with four others, are presenting four free performances of “Uh-Oh, Here Comes Christmas”

at three Lamorinda venues December 16 through 20.

The two-act musical play is based on stories by Robert Fulghum, author of “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.” It pokes gentle fun at dealing with the hassles and realities of the Christmas season. “The silly thing [the script] sat on my desk for five

years” Pinkham says, before he decided to produce it. Three of the four performances use church venues, but “this is not a church play.”

The play employs a low key approach, using simple, unadorned performance space. The cast is tired in Christmas party casual. Five chairs, four poinsettias and one refrigerator set the stage. Everything -- props, costumes, lighting and sound equipment -- even venues-- have been donated. Admission is free, but audiences will be encouraged to donate to the Contra Costa Food Bank and the Town Hall Theater Education Program.

Pinkham has directed and performed in the East Bay for nearly twenty years. He directs Campolindo’s musical performances and works with Diablo Theater’s Stars 2000, California Academy of Performing Arts and The Lafayette Town Hall Theatre Company, where he is on the Board of Directors. This production came from his desire to work with an adult ensemble with some natural

story telling ability. There were no tryouts, laughs cast member Ben Fraticelli – “We were appointed!”

Joining Fraticelli in the cast are Sara Steenhouse, Ted DeAtley (also from Lafayette), and Carol Somerton. The cast met though their participation at Lafayette Christian Church, where Steenhouse is an Associate Pastor. DeAtley formerly taught at an elementary school in Bangkok, Thailand. Fraticelli is a “partially retired Executive Director” of the Community Health Academy in Oakland. Somerton is a Contra Costa County children’s librarian.

“Uh Oh, Here Comes Christmas” will be presented December 16, 7 p.m. at Lafayette Christian Church, 584 Glenside Drive Lafayette; Dec 17 and 18, 7:30 p.m. at Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church, 10 Moraga Valley Lane, Moraga and at 8 p.m., Dec 20, Lafayette Town Hall Theatre, 3535 School Street, Lafayette. Admission is free.

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## Festival of Trees Nearly Falls

By Sophie Braccini



Dianne Wilson with her dog Ranger

Dianne Wilson couldn’t help but feel proud at the sight of seven decorated Christmas trees, ready to be auctioned, in the side lobby of Moraga Royale. The Festival of Trees fundraising event that Wilson, the Executive Director of the assisted living facility, started planning last July almost didn’t happen – three days before the opening date most of her corporate sponsors bailed out.

Accomplishing a real tour-de-force, supported by staff, residents and their families, as well as two remaining sponsors (CVS Pharmacy and Hospice of the East Bay), Wilson managed to get all of her trees decorated and generously complete with gifts. The silent

auction started on December 1st closed on December 7th. All proceeds will go to the Rescue One Foundation, the organization that supports Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) paramedics.

“MOFD comes here twice a month on average,” explains Wilson, “they are always very professional and kind, and their equipment, some of which was purchased with Rescue One donations, saves lives.” State law requires that the facility call them if a resident falls and bumps his/her head, even if it is a minor fall. Every time it happens, Wilson says, she gets the same graciousness and quality of service from MOFD.

“We are doing this for our residents, too,” adds Wilson,

Photo Ohlen Alexander

“they enjoyed the whole process as well as coming here and seeing the trees.” Wilson explains that some of the older residents do not feel confident venturing outside of the grounds and really appreciate activities and new entertainment on site.

Moraga Royale, a retirement community of over 80 residents, is located at the corner of Country Club Drive and Canyon. About 18 of the patients are part of the dementia unit that’s separate from the rest of the grounds. “We take these residents for a visit to the trees every day,” says Wilson, “and they enjoy it every time.”

It was the first time that such an auction was organized in Moraga. “I feel that this is

only a beginning and that this fundraising event has the potential to become bigger and maybe include a dinner and/or a fashion show,” says Wilson. For a first time, the display was quite impressive. Wilson added a ‘donation boot’ from MOFD where visitors could just contribute a few dollars to their favorite fire department.

Reflecting on what happened with the donors that fell short of their promises, Wilson concluded, “It’s like what is happening in the world, it’s the small, local people that are making it happen.”

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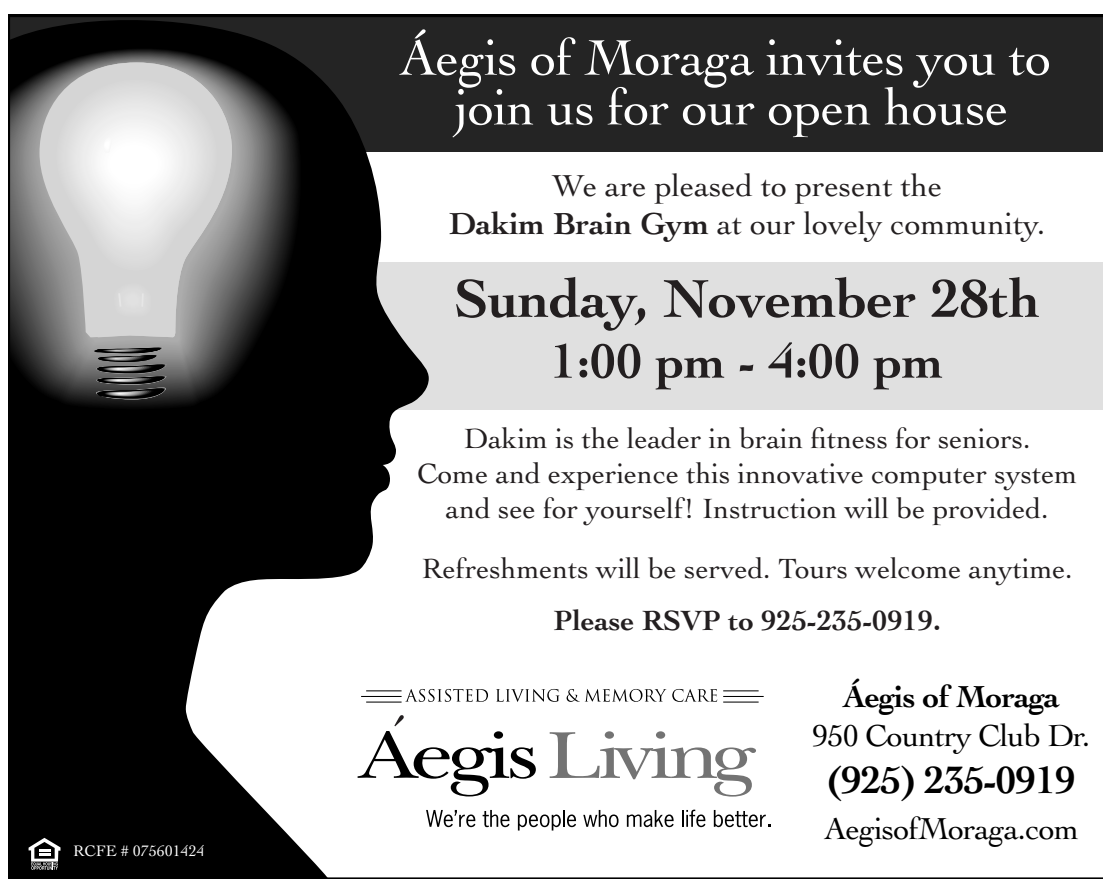



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