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Best Actor Ryan Merriman signing the wall of fame



The sky lit up on opening night



Bill Snider: Darkhorse wins Best Performance in Iron Filmmaker short. Photo Ohlen Alexander



Opening Night of the film festival drew a large crowd to the New Rheem Theatre
Photos Doug Kohen

Indie Film Festival Makes its Mark in Moraga

By Andrea A. Firth

Moviegoers packed the lobby of the New Rheem Theater at the Friday night opening reception of the 13th Annual California Independent Film Festival (CAIFF). Locals stood shoulder-to-shoulder nibbling hors d'oeuvres and sipping wine from the vineyards of Moraga winegrowers Sal and Susan Captain as they waited for the start of the evening's sold-out feature film, *The 5th Quarter*. The excitement was palpable and attendees jostled for the best viewing spots as the Festival's Program Director Beau Behan introduced the film's writer, director, and producer Rick Bieber and leading actor Ryan Merriman. The audience ap-

plauded as Bieber and the 27-year old Merriman placed their signatures on the tiled wall in the lobby—Moraga's newly-designated Wall of Fame.

The 5th Quarter, based on the true story of the Abbate family whose teenage son Luke was killed in a reckless driving accident, struck an emotional chord with many residents. Bieber spent several months with the family to learn about their story of loss and understand their journey to recovery. "Writing the screenplay went quickly, but it was emotional for me just to write it down," said Bieber.

... continued on page L4

Quote of the Week:

"Perhaps we should be arguing that Moraga has been subsidizing Orinda all this time?"
Read Letters to the Editor, page A8

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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Lafayette Parcel Tax for Schools on May Ballot

By Cathy Tyson

With a unanimous vote by the Lafayette School Board, a parcel tax will go on the May 3rd ballot as an emergency measure to continue to provide a quality education program in the face of deep cuts in school funding by the state legislature.

Voters will be asked to levy a \$176 per parcel temporary tax for four years to maintain core academic programs in math, science, art, music and more. If approved, the tax will take effect on July 1, 2011 and deliver \$1.5 million to Lafayette schools each year. Seniors can receive a special exemption.

Resolutions for the tax spell out the reasoning behind the measure: the District has not been fully funded to provide a quality education, and the District has exhausted all feasible means of generating revenue. No stone has been left unturned, even sports fields are rented out to LMYA and CYO programs, and facility rental fees are paid by the summer Jazz camp, scouts and others.

"We have to plan for the worst," said School Board Member Teresa Gerringer. "We've already cut \$2 million over the past two years and we still have a structural deficit." ... continued on page S4

Gung Hay Fat Choy!

Happy Lunar New Year! With the arrival of tonight's new moon we usher in the Year of the Hare. The Hare represents longevity. It is said that people born under this sign are fun-loving, artistic, mild-mannered and conscientious. Following on the heels of a rather stormy year of the Tiger, 2011 should see things begin to calm down under the common sense and gentle influence of the Hare.

Graphic by Shayan Tajbakhsh



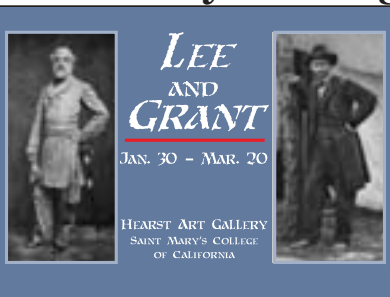
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In an effort to get the paper to you in a timely manner, we are converting our delivery method from the U.S. mail to a local home delivery service that will place the paper on your driveway every other Wednesday.

If you live in Lafayette or Moraga, this issue should have been delivered to you on Wednesday, February 2.

Home delivery to Orinda will begin on February 16. Please call (925) 377-0977 or email homedelivery@lamorindaweekly.com if you have any questions.

Lee and Grant Exhibit Opens at Saint Mary's College



By Sophie Braccini

The Lee and Grant exhibition opened last weekend at Saint Mary's College Hearst Art Gallery in Moraga and will continue until March 20th. Organized by the NEH On The Road, a special initiative of the National Endowment ... read on page L1

A Lamorinda Valentine's Day

By Lou Fancher

Celebrating Valentine's Day without leaving Lamorinda turned out to be much harder than expected. When the assignment came in, I thought: Piece of cake!

Literally. With bakeries, florists, gift boutiques, spas, new and established restaurants, movie theaters, and even a luxury hotel, what could be simpler? Within 30 minutes, the list of choices was longer than...

... read on page L3



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Lafayette

- Public Meetings**
- City Council** Monday, February 14, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd
 - Planning Commission** Monday, February 7, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd
 - Design Review** Monday, February 14, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center in the Arts & Science Discovery Center at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 - Tri-City Meeting** Thursday, February 10, 7:00 pm
Joint meeting with Moraga and Orinda at Saint Mary's College, Soda Center

• Police Report •



camera and lenses, electronic reader and clothing were taken from a car parked on St. Mary's Road.

Around the same time, 01/12/11-01/15/11 A laptop and headphones (valued at \$1250) were stolen from another car; the rear window of an SUV was broken out—the thief helped him/her self to a \$3,000 laptop; jewelry and a laptop valued at \$21,000 were taken in an overnight residential burglary on Las Trampas Road.

Have they lost their way? 01/18/11 Thieves snatched a GPS from a car parked in the owner's driveway overnight on Moon Court. If the directions say "go straight," will they turn themselves in?

Playing games, 01/14/11 Someone stole credit card information and made an online purchase of an electronic game system. The card owner is temporarily out the refuted purchase amount and doesn't even get to play the game...

Does it come with matching heels? 01/17/11 A thief (perhaps a "bag lady") with expensive taste stole a high-priced handbag from inside a locked vehicle on Walnut Street.

Not a pretty picture, 01/15/11 \$2300 worth of stolen goods-- a

What's Happening with Redevelopment in Lafayette?

By Cathy Tyson

With Governor Jerry Brown's proposal to eliminate redevelopment agencies in California, cities across the state are scrambling to commit funds so they will be beyond the long arm of Sacramento.

Lafayette, the only city in Lamorinda that has a Redevelopment Agency, is not thrilled at the prospect. At the moment, it's unclear if Governor Brown's proposal will remain or may evolve. If adopted, and passed by the legislature it would save about 2% of the state budget.

In a nutshell redevelopment programs allow local governments to borrow against future property tax increases in designated redevelopment areas. That money can be used for projects that would spur economic development, create jobs and benefit the community.

It was just last November that California voters passed Proposition 22, which demanded an end to the raid of local government funds. The League of California Cities is looking into whether Brown's proposal is legal, especially just months after the passage of Prop. 22.

In Lafayette, Redevelopment money is responsible in part for the Mercantile Building, the Veterans Hall and the Library and Learning Center. Outside of Lafayette, redevelopment money helped pave the way for the new and improved downtown Pleasant Hill and IKEA, along with six other projects in Emeryville.

According to the City of Emeryville, "These seven major redevelopment projects have generated \$35 million in property tax revenue for the Redevelopment Agency, \$25 million in sales tax revenue, and have created 7,600 jobs. These revenues represent \$15 returned in tax revenue for every \$1 of Redevelopment Agency investment."

"The silver lining is this would be a lot worse if we were in the middle of a project," said Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson. "Everything is very up in the air right now." Most of Lafayette's redevelopment money is committed to pay off bond debt and loans from the Library project.

Foundation Celebrates Fundraising Goal

By Cathy Tyson



Photo courtesy Kathy Merchant

There was champagne to celebrate reaching the \$4 million goal of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation's ("Foundation") Open Doors, Open Minds campaign. Even in a tough economy, generous donors contributed funds to literally keep the doors open of the one of a kind Lafayette Library and Learning Center. Longer hours, increased programming and the sustainability of the building were made possible by donations from individuals, foundation and corporate grants, room rentals, and special events. With 53% of the facility's total operating costs paid for by the Foundation, monetary support is critical to keep this public treasure open for business.

"Attendance at the library is mushrooming by the day" said Mike Gilson, newly appointed President of the Foundation Trustees. "Over 450,000 patrons have come through the doors in the first year – an extraordinary achievement. Clearly it's had a positive effect on Lafayette."

"We're finding our expectation of participation is always exceeded," said Gilson, who is responsible for a variety of things including strategic planning. One of his tasks was to create his own job description: "help crystallize thinking and define 'what you want to be when you grow up.'"

Foundation Executive Director Kathy Merchant eagerly praises the new President, "Mike is very gracious, a voracious reader, a gifted writer and has great organizational skills - along with a financial background." He and his wife moved to Lafayette in 1990 and always had a passion for a new library. Gilson worked for many years in the corporate world and has been actively involved in quite a number of community projects.

Gilson feels he has a special obligation as President since so many friends and neighbors con-

tributed—over 25% of the households in Lafayette donated to the initial fundraising campaign—that the Foundation needs to manage the Library effectively and spend resources wisely.

Even before the official grand opening in November of 2009, it's been a learn-as-you-go process for Merchant. She stays ridiculously busy managing the day to day operations of the establishment.

"We need the community to understand we need them, can't do it without them," said Merchant. Both Merchant and Gilson credit a number of people with the success of the Library, Librarian Susan Weaver Librarian, Building Manager Brian Long and the Friends of the Library.

As the nature of learning has changed, so has this Library. By moving from a traditional building for quiet reading to a community living room and gathering space, this unique facility embraces the challenge of appealing to disparate groups of users. By offering a layout with a separate Community Hall, homework center, kids area and meeting rooms—everybody's happy and wants to come back for more.

In addition to fundraising, the Foundation manages the first of its kind Glenn Seaborg Consortium - a partnership of a dozen renowned education, science and arts institutions. These partners offer an array of specialty programs designed to appeal to a broad audience - from toddlers to seniors. In February look for events on Building the Hoover Dam, The Obama Effect: Where does the African American Community Stand Now and a special Sweet Thursday event with author Po Bronson. As the Library's popularity has snowballed, even more innovative groups want to hold events at the Library - like the World Affairs Council and the Gold Coast Players. For more information, go to www.LLCCF.org.

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Burton Valley Homeowners' Remodel Denied on a Split Decision

By Cathy Tyson

At a marathon City Council meeting, the controversial proposed remodel of a Burton Valley home was, after hours of heated testimony, ultimately denied – although the denial resolution was not officially adopted, on a 3-2 vote, giving the homeowners, the Polichio family, a little wiggle room. At issue is a modest second story addition to a traditional 1950's rancher on Lucas Drive.

City staff has been supportive of the project all along, in a process that has taken approximately a year. The project has had its ups and downs: the Design Review Commission conditionally approved it, but the Planning Commission voted to deny citing neighborhood compatibility.

That theme was touched upon by Council Member Don Tatzin, "What is the definition of compatible?" Noting the addition required no variances and met all building guidelines, Architect Ken Hertel listed a host of design ele-

ments that this project has in common with the immediate neighborhood: porches, materials, garage, siding and windows, and suggested looking at Burton Valley in a larger context to define compatibility.

Homeowner Noelle Polichio, in an emotional plea to the Council, said, "This process has been expensive, exhausting and upsetting. We just can't do this anymore, we care about Burton Valley as much as anyone."

Several folks spoke up in support of the project; noting that, "it's not 1950 anymore" and criticized the "rancher timewarp;" another was concerned about ambiguous design standards. One neighborhood resident suggested looking at the "spirit of the design." Opponents also added their concerns, once again citing compatibility along with size and mass worries.

Tatzin talked about objective and subjective components of com-

patibility. The objective elements have clearly been met – the height, setbacks and more are well within what the city requires. The problem is the subjective component, a personal opinion that may mean different things to different people.

"We're considering all of our options," said homeowner Joe Polichio adding, "We're extremely disappointed." He feels they have compromised throughout the process, adjusting the architecture in response to legitimate concerns. "But we are so close, we just ask for the opportunity to respond to their suggestions, a chance to articulate their feedback architecturally." Just one more vote in favor would have approved the project.

Polichio feels they may be able to please everyone, if the Council can create a compromise, where everyone is a little flexible – perhaps in the future this controversy, and potential lawsuits, can be avoided.

Okay for New Spirit Van

By Cathy Tyson



Photo provided

In a process that takes two years, Lamorinda Senior Transportation was approved to apply for a federal grant that would pay for a replacement Spirit van. Serving many fragile seniors, Program Coordinator Mary Bruns explains that they are able to assist passengers in their 80's and 90's, with one passenger that's 100.

The existing van is rapidly aging, "We put on about 1,000 miles a month picking up and dropping off seniors," said Bruns. The

ridership has continued to grow over the years, almost doubling since 2006.

Getting the new van at a deep discount helped City Council members quickly approve the application. "The Federal Government pays for 88.53% of the cost of the van so we only have to pay 11.47%. The expected cost to the City of Lafayette is expected to be \$10,000 or less," said Bruns in a staff report.

The service is meant to assist seniors live independently in their

homes for as long as possible, by providing rides for grocery shopping, errands, doctor appointments and more. Drivers also help bring packages from the van to the house with their "door through door" service. In addition, there's a regular lunch bunch service to the Senior Center in Walnut Creek that offers lunch, socialization and round trip transportation. Both the existing van and the replacement model have a wheelchair lift. For more information or to schedule a ride on the Spirit van call (925) 283-3534.

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Civic News Moraga



Public Meetings	
Town Council	Wednesday, February 9, 7:30 pm Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo
Planning Commission	Monday, February 7, 7:30 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Design Review	Monday, February 14, 7:00 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Tri-City Meeting	Thursday, February 10, 7:00 pm Joint meeting with Lafayette and Orinda at Saint Mary's College, Soda Center
Liaison	Friday, February 11, 8:00 am Fire Station, 1280 Moraga Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
Town of Moraga online: www.moraga.ca.us
Chamber of Commerce: www.moragachamber.org
Moraga Citizens' Network: www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

• Police Report •



Science gone bad, 1/20/11 After a science experiment at Camino Pablo School several students reported having difficulty breathing. The fifth grade kids were conducting a litmus test that involved bleach, vinegar, dish soap, baking soda, salt and milk of magnesia. Affected students were checked at the scene and released, although one student was transported to Kaiser in Walnut Creek.

Lost & Found, Found iPod and jewelry: On 1/23 A very honest 14-year-old boy found an Apple iPod under a bench near the skate park. On 1/21 a woman turned in a bracelet, earrings and five rings found near the trail across from Saint Mary's College. Lost phone and wallet: On 1/24 a woman left her cell phone unattended inside the Madigan Gym during the afternoon, upon her return it was gone. On 1/12 between 9:45 and 11:00 a fellow reported he lost his wallet at Safeway, it contained a driver's license, BART pass, \$10 cash and bank cards.

Inheritance hoax, 1/20/11 A Butterfield Place resident told officers he received a letter from a British attorney stating he may be entitled to funds from a person who recently passed away in the United Kingdom, since they had the same last name. Unfortunately he sent the requested fee to cover the cost of the legal transaction to Barclay's Bank in the U.K., but he has yet to receive his "inheritance."

Mugging at Gunpoint, 1/24/11 A woman came to the lobby of the Police Department to report someone pointed a handgun at her while she was in the rear parking lot at the Rheem Valley Shopping Center and took her money and cell phone. Despite a search by officers from Moraga, Lafayette, Orinda, Walnut Creek and the California Highway Patrol, the suspect hasn't been located at this time.

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Moraga Developments Move Forward

By Sophie Braccini

It was a very good two weeks for those who want to see more rooftops and more action in Moraga. The Planning Commission acted on two proposals that affect very visible and historic locations, while on January 26th the Town Council approved a plan to construct 27 residences on the hills of Moraga.

Although probably not the beginning of a huge construction spree, these projects are likely to have a significant impact on the future development of the town; the beginnings of revitalization can be expected, while some residents remain concerned that the approval of buildings on, or too close to, ridge lines is a dangerous precedent for a town that cherishes its open views.

Downtown Area Projects in the Planning Phase

On the night of January 18th, the Planning Commission discussed one proposed project on Moraga Road, across from the Rheem Center, and approved another at the historic Barn, which is at the corner of Viader and Country Club Drive. The projects are very different in nature and stage of development, but if they materialize as proposed they have the potential to significantly contribute to the revitalization of the downtown area. "This was one of the best Planning Commission meetings of my life," said Planning Director Lori Salamack after the fact. "We have a very talented and experienced Planning Commission and they did a superb job."

Chris Avant, who presented a modification of his Barn-café project, appeared to be touched by the

number of people who came to the meeting in his support. Members of the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, a local architect, and residents, all spoke in support of Avant's plan to have the ground floor of the building open from 6:00 a.m. to midnight, offering healthy finger foods and wine-tasting. The Planning Commission voted almost unanimously to support the project. Commissioner Bruce Whitley opposed the project on the basis of parking concerns.

"I am invigorated by the support of the community," said Avant after the meeting, "and I plan to open the Barn to the public during the summer of 2011." Last year Avant received approval to open a wine bar in the Barn from 4:00 p.m. to midnight. An extension of the permitted hours, and appealing to different groups of customers, made sense to Avant as he developed his business plan. "This will invigorate the businesses in this part of town and will hopefully be beneficial (to existing businesses)," said Avant.

Jim Knappe, along with his sons and his architect, followed Avant with a presentation of his project. The Knappe family owns the barren two-acre lot adjacent to its 5A Rent-A-Space storage facility on Moraga Road; the lot is currently zoned "agricultural only," and Knappe was on a scouting expedition to find out if a plan to build an apartment/condominium complex on the site stood a chance of being approved. The Commission raised concerns about peak hour traffic, pedestrian flow and over-

flow parking for residents; but agreed that such a development made sense, indicating that Knappe's first priority should be to have the area re-zoned.

The 40 units proposed by the Knappe family would be one or two bedroom condos/apartments stacked on three levels with a parking garage on the first floor—the concept was presented as a housing option for Saint Mary's students, staff and the local workforce. According to the Knappes, this is the only viable solution for the property. "We've studied everything," said Jim Knappe during the study session with the Commission, "the market in Moraga could not support a hotel, and more retail, in view of existing empty spaces, does not make economic sense." The Planning Commissioners agreed with Knappe; Commission Chair Jim Obsitnik added "if we want a vibrant retail, we need more people."

Rancho Laguna Project Approved

On January 26th the Town Council approved, by a vote of 2-1, the development of 27 homes on the hilly property known as Rancho Laguna along Rheem Boulevard. A previous approval by the Planning Commission in August of 2009 was appealed by a group of residents who challenged its consistency with the General Plan. Their position was that some of the homes would significantly alter the natural setting, not to mention being located too close to ridge lines. Almost a year and a half of discussions and iterations brought forward a much-modified project. "I think that most people will be

pleased when they look at the concessions that were made on both sides," said Town Manager Jill Keimach after the meeting.

Rancho Laguna is a 180-acre property located on the eastern section of Rheem Boulevard, towards Saint Mary's Road, where cows now roam. The approved development consists of eight homes along Rheem Boulevard, and 19 on the upper plateau located on the southeast portion of the lot.

Along the road to approval various aspects of the projects have been addressed, including the preservation of the creek, the removal of an access road that impacted the creek, and the visual impact of the project.

Moraga resident Suzanne Jones, speaking on behalf of the appellant group, indicated that the modified project presented by staff could be acceptable, in spite of remaining concerns, if one specific lot was moved. That lot, located on the southeastern side of the upper plateau, is located on or very close to what the group considers to be a ridge line.

Dave Trotter was the only Council member to oppose the new plan, and did so on the basis that the location of the one controversial lot was not compliant with the General Plan; Mayor Karen Mendonca and Council Member Howard Harpham approved the plan. Vice-Mayor Mike Metcalf and Council Member Ken Chew had to recuse themselves from the discussion since they live too close to the proposed development.

Meet New Officer Mary Ann Grubb

By Sophie Braccini

Mary Ann Grubb is a no-nonsense woman who knows what she wants and goes out and gets it. A passionate coach and teacher for the first 12 years of her career, she decided to become what she had always wanted to be—a police officer—"Once I got the coaching out of my system," she explains. Now Grubb patrols the streets of Moraga, mostly on weekend nights, one of the tough shifts on which newcomers must make their debut.

Grubb attended Carondelet High School in Concord and Santa Clara University for her BA degree; she now lives in Walnut Creek. She said she always wanted to become a police officer, but she fell in love with coaching cross country. "I didn't want to give coaching up," she said, "so I taught math for 12 years, as a means to get to coach."

Grubb says that the pride of coaching resides in taking young athletes who, at the beginning of the



Officer Grubb with Lieutenant Price

Photo Sophie Braccini

season will run 2 miles in 19 minutes but after 2 1/2 months of training will cover the distance in 13 minutes. "The progress of kids is fantastic," she says, "it gives them confidence, and being a big kid myself, I love hanging out with them." Grubb enjoyed coaching varsity as well and recounts with pride the many wins of her teams.

In 2009 she decided it was time to become a police officer and she put herself through the Napa Valley College Police Academy, a six-month program she found very

rigorous. "It was a positive experience," she said, "I learned a lot about myself and police work." She notes that the program enforces a very strict discipline, "You find out if you are tough enough to come back the next day." In her class of 50 (five of whom were women), 30 graduated (three of them women).

Grubb was recruited by the Moraga Police Department in August of 2010. "I received other offers, but then those departments went into a hiring freeze," she says, "it's not that there is no need for more police officers, it's that there is no money to hire them." Some of her classmates have not found police jobs yet.

Grubb says she has found a good fit for herself in Moraga. "There are a lot of plusses in a small department," she says, "you get to know the people quickly, the learning curve is pretty good, you do a lot of the leg work." She works the graveyard shift from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. over the weekend, three or four days in a row, "The Chief (Bob Priebe) works that shift too," she says, "it's great to see him work; it's the best way to learn."

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Crime Awareness

By Sophie Braccini

Crime Awareness is the title of an article that Moraga Police Chief Robert Priebe wrote for the latest Moraga About Town civic bulletin (online at www.moraga.ca.us). His department has hit the ground running in 2011, with a 50% increase in calls over the same time last year – as of January 28th, there were 61 calls, as compared to 41 in January of 2010.

2011's crimes-to-date include an armed robbery behind the Rheem Center and a

multiple-car theft leading to a chase by the Moraga and Orinda Police Departments that ended in an accident near Orinda's Wagner Ranch Elementary School, which killed one of the suspects (27-year-old Christina Ramos of Hayward; at press time, other suspect(s) are still at large); along with residential and property thefts, including a case of electronic equipment stolen on the Saint Mary's College (SMC) campus that ended on January 27th with the arrest of two SMC students

and the return of the stolen property. "We have definitely experienced a spike in January," says Priebe.

Moraga's police may go beyond their jurisdiction to arrest suspects. For example, in pursuit of individuals that stole a wallet from an unlocked car, Priebe's officers are conducting an investigation in Alameda County and will press charges against the suspects when they are identified. "Every time I send someone out to investigate, I need to pull off the

streets one of the two officers who are here at all times," says Priebe, "it was good to effectively put the handcuffs on the thieves that stole SMC's property, but we needed three officers, including myself, and two officers from Walnut Creek to conduct the investigation and make the arrest; this is a very expensive operation for us."

Looking at statistics from 2009 and 2010, Priebe noted that his department is the least expensive per capita in the county. "In Moraga, residents pay \$122 a year per capita for police service; in Lafayette the cost is \$198; in Orinda \$223; \$416 in Kensington; and \$164 in Clayton. With such limited resources, people should not have unrealistic expectations about what we can do."

With one officer on leave, Priebe was not able to have the detective position he hoped for – "We are customer-service oriented and do our best with what we have," he says.

If something happens, Priebe recommends that you call 911 immediately from a land line (from a cell phone call Dispatch at 925-284-5010). Residents interested in starting a 'Neighborhood Watch' group should contact Lieutenant Jeff Price at (925) 888-7049.

As Seen in Lamorinda...



Dennis and Sandra Chiodo walk their American Miniature Horse, Sam, in the streets of Moraga. Dennis gave Sam to Sandra 15 years ago as an anniversary gift. Miniature horses are not ponies, they can pull a cart, and some are presented in shows. Sam is just a friendly pet who loves people and needs to be walked regularly.
Photo Sophie Braccini

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Bill Finnegan



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Elena Tyson



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Bill Finnegan

Square footage, acreage, and other information herein, has been received from one or more of a variety of different sources. Such information has not been verified by Alain Pinel Realtors. If important to buyers, buyers should conduct their own investigation.

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Civic News

Orinda

Public Meetings

City Council Tuesday, February 15, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission Tuesday, February 8, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission
Wednesday, February 9, 6:30 pm
Community Room, City Hall, 22 Orinda Way

Tri-City Meeting Thursday, February 10, 7:00 pm
Joint meeting with Lafayette and Moraga at Saint Mary's College, Soda Center

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
City of Orinda: www.cityoforinda.org
Chamber of Commerce: www.orindachamber.org

• Police Report •




Attempted break in, 1/18/11 A Canon Drive resident reported that someone attempted to break into her home via the side door. Apparently the unknown suspect huffed and puffed and attempted to bust open the door. But he or she only succeeded in causing damage to the door frame.

Drunk driving, 1/13/11 A car was observed making a sudden lane change near Camino Pablo and Highway 24. Concerned officer on duty pulled the driver over, who showed obvious signs of intoxication. Wouldn't

you know it, he flunked his field sobriety test and was arrested for D.U.I. He also had possession of controlled substances, Ritalin and Tramadol in unlabeled bottles.

Warrant arrest for coke, 1/21/11 Not the soft drink. Contra Costa Sheriff's Office picked up a fellow on Brookwood Road on an outstanding \$50,000 warrant for California Health and Safety Code 11351.5 Possession of cocaine for sale.

Warrant arrest for tail lights, 1/19/11 An Orinda resident was arrested on an outstanding \$1199 warrant for tail lights. Should have gotten those fixed, would have been way cheaper.



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Orinda's Budget on Target

By Andrea A. Firth

The City Council's midyear review of Orinda's budget found the City's fiscal planning essentially on target. The summary of revenues and expenditures through the end of December 2010 revealed no major surprises, but a couple of line items were cause for a raised eyebrow.

Property tax revenue, which constitutes the lion share of Orinda's income, was projected to increase by 1% but final numbers from the County Assessor's Office indicate property tax revenue will decrease by 0.25%. This represents about \$40,000 to Orinda's bottom line, and according to Finance Director Emily Hobdy, this is the first decline in property tax revenue that Orinda has experienced.

While sales tax revenue is down approximately 17% from the previous fiscal year, the most recent quarter's decline was only 6%. "I expect the rate of [sales tax revenue] decline has slowed," said Hobdy. Investment income also declined significantly as compared to the prior year. This was largely due to the fact that a number of investments were sold; and the lost interest income was offset by the gain on sale for the current fiscal year. On a good note, revenue tied to recreation fees continues to rise and will add an additional \$50,000 to the City's coffers.

On the expenditure side of the balance sheet, Vice Mayor Steve Glazer was wary of a couple of proposed appropriations and asked City staff to provide further information

before moving forward.

A traffic study to address the snarls on Moraga Way is estimated to cost \$120,000 over the next two years. "This is a significant amount of money," said Glazer adding that he wanted to establish a high bar for justification of this expenditure. Council Member Amy Worth recommended that a public meeting be held to ensure that all sides of this issue are heard and addressed. The item will be brought back to the Council with more detailed information.

Glazer also balked at a \$60,000 appropriation for an ADA Transition Plan to develop an analysis of improvement to City facilities to meet the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). "The City is commit-

ted to improving access," said Glazer. "I know this is a touchy subject. But I don't know what the transition plan is, and this is a lot of money," he added requesting staff to provide more information. Worth concurred, reiterating the request for more data regarding the cost and components.

The Council did approve spending up to \$30,000 in insurance funds or waiving up to \$30,000 in processing fees associated with repairs to be undertaken as part of a settlement agreement associated with an ADA non-compliance suit. "The improvements for access for disability are required," stated City attorney Osa Wolff.

"It's not a question of if but when," she added, "It's a pretty big universe of issues the city has to study and address."

Bike, Trail, Walkway Plan Put in Place

By Andrea A. Firth

Over two years in development, the Orinda Bicycle, Trail and Walkway (BTW) Master Plan was unanimously approved for adoption by the City Council at its January 18th meeting. The BTW Master Plan provides a long-term vision for the development of bike facilities, trails, and walkways taking a twenty-year look forward at

the potential infrastructure improvements that could be made throughout the City. Consultants from Alta Planning + Design in Berkeley developed the 82-page plan with extensive input from the Council, city staff, and a resident advisory group.

The BTW Master Plan identifies 43 bike, trail, and walkway projects representing

11.6 miles of bicycle lanes and routes, 12.2 miles of walkways, 4.1 miles of natural surface trails, along with 13 intersection improvements. Total cost for these capital improvements tops \$5.5 million (in 2009 dollars). "We did a lot of field work. The projects that are presented in here should be feasible," said Lauren Ledbetter of Alta Plan-

ning + Design. Council Member Dean Orr commended the comprehensive nature of the project list, but he acknowledged that given the City's scarce resources, the City would not be likely to fund any of the projects in the short term. City Manager Janet Keeter concurred adding, "This plans sets us up to pursue grants."

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OCF Celebrates 1st Year and 2010 Grant Recipients

By Andrea A. Firth



Pictured are Dick Burkhalter, V.P. of the Orinda Community Foundation and Ted Urban a Community Liaison for the Foundation. Photo by Richard Westin

The Orinda Community Foundation (OCF) has awarded over \$23,000 in grants to community organizations and events for 2010. OCF grants helped to purchase two pieces of public art by the Library and Community Center, including the forever in flight frog over the fountain, and also provided funds for the Lamorinda Spirit Van, the Starlight

ater arts education program conducted through Cal Shakes and the Educational Foundation of Orinda, and the City's 25th anniversary celebration and July 4th parade.

The Foundation was established a year ago, because the City no longer had the resources to support these sorts of grants, says OCF President Richard Westin. "The first thing we did last spring was to send a letter to the community to explain the Foundation's mission and to ask for donations," he says adding, "We received hundreds of donations. It was really heartwarming." The Foundation also held a community golf tournament fundraiser in July that attracted over 100 participants and hosted the very popular Norcal Kids Triathlon. The OCF will host its 2nd annual golf tournament at Orinda Country Club on July 25th of this year and the third annual kids triathlon will be held on Saturday, August 27th, 2011.

To celebrate the first anniversary of the founding of the Orinda Community Foundation and its 2010 grant recipients, a reception will be held on Monday February 7th from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Orinda Library Gallery. All are welcome. For more information about the Orinda Community Foundation and how to donate, go to <http://orindafoundation.org/> or call (925) 254-0800.

body makeovers
by Sheena

"Within an eight-week period, I lost 22 lbs and eliminated my type-2 diabetes."

I am a 52 year old guy that came to Sheena weighing 208 lbs, which is too much for my 5 ft 10 in. height. I had a big gut with a 37 inch waist. I had recently been to the doctor and had been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes based on a triglyceride level of 379 mg/dl and a glucose level of 115 mg/dl. Given this information my wife and I decided to try the Living Lean program.



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Within an 8 week period, I lost 22 lbs and reduced my waist size to 33 inches. My recent blood tests indicate that I have eliminated the type 2 diabetes issues with a triglyceride level of 150 mg/dl and a glucose level of less than 100 mg/dl. I feel better than I can ever remember. I feel strong, energized and have an overall positive attitude. My wife has had similar positive results, and it has been very reinforcing to do the program together. Thank you Sheena! – Bill Rudolph

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Orinda's City Council members recently spent some time with new and repeating Governor Jerry Brown while in Sacramento attending the League of California Cities training. Pictured standing are City Manager Janet Keeter and Dean Orr, and seated are (from L) Amy Worth, Governor Brown, and Mayor Victoria Smith. Not pictured is Vice Mayor Steve Glazer who served as photographer.

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Letters to the Editor

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email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: **Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570**

Editor:
I must respond to Diana Stephens' recent letter since she repeats Steve Cohn's erroneous calculations purporting to "prove" that Orinda has been subsidizing Moraga's fire service. She claims, yet again, that Orinda has been subsidizing Moraga since the formation of the district in 1997 which is absolutely NOT TRUE. One faulty assumption has resulted in a totally incorrect conclusion. Our city boundaries are not the same as MOFD's Moraga and Orinda service areas. All multi-city fire districts, including MOFD, ignore city limits and operate according to "areas of service." In the case of MOFD, there are 700 Orinda homes, all of which used to be part of the old Moraga Fire District, included in the service area of the two Moraga fire stations. LOGICALLY, ANY ACCURATE ANALYSIS OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES SHOULD USE THE AREA OF SERVICE, NOT CITY BOUNDARIES, IN DETERMINING WHETHER OR NOT CITIZENS ARE SUBSIDIZING THE OTHER'S SERVICE. If one were to make the appropriate analysis, using service area, not city boundaries, then the tax revenues collected in those 700 South Orinda homes should be accrued to the Moraga side of the ledger. Those 700 homes, plus those in the Town of Moraga, are paying the costs of running the two fire stations in Moraga. It could be argued that a significant portion of the tax revenues collected from the additional 800 Orinda homes that are first due for medical emergencies out of Moraga should also be accrued to the Moraga side of the ledger, especially since more than 70% of MOFD's calls are medical emergencies. Perhaps we should be arguing that Moraga has been subsidizing Orinda all this time?

In any case, every homeowner in California is paying the same 1% property tax rate. We are extremely fortunate that the citizens of Orinda and Moraga voted to tax themselves for fire service long before Prop 13 passed or we would be in the same dire financial straits as Contra Costa Fire, Pinole Fire, and East County Fire Districts now find themselves. I have never heard, as Ms. Stephens claims, MOFD directors or Moraga Council members tell Orinda Council members that the "Orinda taxpayers' subsidy to Moraga is Orinda's problem." Rather, they have taken great pains to demonstrate that THERE IS NO SUBSIDY. Yes, it is true that parts of Sleepy Hollow and the Downs have a longer response time than everyone would like which is the main reason Chief Bradley chose the Sleepy Hollow Homeowners Association to work with first on the new Firewise Communities program. It is my understanding that MOFD is exploring options to address this issue. Yes, EBMUD's water pipes continue to be an issue. But, they are, after all, the property of EBMUD. Why aren't we going after the water district to fix its own pipes? Additionally, it is important to note MOFD has purchased water tankers to compensate for the inadequate water flow in some areas of Orinda. THE CITY COUNCIL DOES NOT NEED TO FORM YET ANOTHER CITIZENS' TASK FORCE TO STUDY NON-EXISTENT ISSUES --- AGAIN. Citizen's concerns should be taken directly to our elected representatives on the MOFD Board - local control at its best. It is unreasonable and unrealistic to suggest we take revenues from MOFD and give them to the City. It is time to move on and find practical ways of generating revenue to re-build our roads and infrastructure.

Ellen Dale
Orinda

Editor:
There are two parts of the proposed Moraga Adobe plan which could do extreme damage to all of Orinda. The first of these is the hazard of golf balls falling on the Adobe development from the adjacent elevated Moraga Country Club Golf Course. The capacity of these golf balls to cause injury is shown by the fact that the Claxtons, the former owners of the Adobe property, had to move their horses to another location because of their injuries from falling golf balls. The Developers have suggested planting trees as a solution for the golf ball problem. This might work 30 years from now but is useless in the present. To have adequate golf ball protection a 50-foot high net must be installed by the Developers and maintained by them for the next 30 years.

Keep in mind that one of these falling golf balls hitting the top of the head of a young child could paralyze him for life. Since the City of Orinda allowed this known hazard, the City would be responsible for the cost of caring for the child, and this cost could bankrupt Orinda. A second major hazard from the proposed development is that there is only one entry and exit road in the development and the development is on slide-prone land. An earthquake would very likely close the road of the development which would keep the fire trucks out and the residents trapped inside. If, as is likely, a fire breaks out, not only would the development burn but the immediately adjacent brush-covered hillside would ignite. This could quickly become a fire storm such as the Great Oakland Fire and burn down all of Orinda since the brush has never been cut on the western hillsides of Orinda. The solution to this problem is to require a second road into the development. This road could connect to existing adjacent Dolores Way, a public road. The Developer should make this connection.

Clyde Vaughn
Orinda

Editor:
On December 9, 2010, I mailed the following letter to Ms. Kathy Foulkes, Director, East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD). Since Ms. Foulkes has not responded to my letter, I thought perhaps I could use your publication to direct my questions to all EBMUD Directors and to appropriate management. At the same time, other water users and rate payers may be interested in EBMUD's response:

Dear Ms. Foulkes:
I read "East Bay Water 2010" with considerable interest. It contains 21 pages of information about water conservation, water transfers, water desalination, water banking, water recycling, water partnering, and . . . Have I left anything out? Twenty-one pages of information about how to address potential and probable water shortages . . . but not one word about our water user overage. One can only guess at the tens of millions of dollars EBMUD will spend testing and trying and experimenting and probing for ways to stretch our water supplies. My guess would be that for less than one thousand dollars EBMUD directors could write letters to various federal and state executives and legislators pointing out that much of the costly testing, trying, experimenting, and probing you will be doing would be unnecessary if America and California would end their perpetual and accelerating population growth. If America's population doubles and redoubles in this century as it virtually did in the last century, odds are good that California's and Northern California's populations will also double and redouble. Should that happen in EBMUD's territory, how far will all the costly testing, trying, experimenting, and probing take us? Isn't it time for some brave directors in some embattled water district somewhere to stand up and tell it like it is? Does EBMUD have such brave directors?

Cordially,
Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

Editor:
The Lamorinda community lost a treasure, with the passing of Diane Hurst. She had art exhibits and sold artwork, flowers and produce from her little farm on Saint Marys Road. My condolences to all of her friends and family. She will be missed.
Bruce R. Peterson
Lafayette

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Lamorinda Sports & Schools

Miramonte Boys' Basketball Splits Series with Acalanes

Lady Mats defeat Lady Dons

By Conrad Bassett



Stephen Collins (21) drives to the basket through Miramonte defenders Anthony Piganelli (1) and Matt Lim (4). Photo Jordan Fong



Kiran Shastri (21) pushes the ball up court. Photo Jordan Fong

The second half of the Diablo Foothill Athletic League basketball season has started and the three Lamorinda schools are jockeying for the opportunity to return to the post-season. In Orinda last Friday night, Acalanes boys came to avenge an earlier loss to Miramonte. Acalanes' girls did not have as much luck as the boys. They lost to the Lady Mats for the second time this season, although keeping

the game much closer this time around.

The Miramonte boys' varsity edged the Dons 62-60 on the road earlier in the month and Acalanes did not want to have to play catch-up again. Behind the sharp shooting pair of seniors Stephen Collins and Michael Jackson, the Dons opened up a 14-9 lead after one period and increased it to 33-16 off of a three by junior James Griffin late

in the second quarter.

Not to be outdone, Miramonte came clawing back in the second half. Senior Anthony Piganelli muscled inside for six third period points and at the end of the period the Dons' lead was down to 11.

The teams traded baskets early in the fourth period as junior Ross Anderson scored 10 of his game-high 20 points including a banked-in three pointer to cut the lead to 56-50 with 3:10 to go. The Mats closed the lead to four with 21 seconds to play but Collins and Griffin each calmly hit two free throws to seal the 61-54 win.

Collins finished with eight rebounds to go with his 17 points. Griffin had 12 points. Anderson added ten rebounds for a double-double in the loss.

Dons head coach Darrell Hirschman Jr. felt good about his team-wide effort. "Stephen Collins was shooting well and hustling all over the court with rebounds, assists, and steals." He also noted, "This was a big win for us as the team is improving at the right time of the year as we finish the DFAL season and prepare for the NCS playoffs."

On the girls' side, Acalanes kept this game much closer than their first meeting when they lost by 27 at home. In arguably the toughest league in Northern California, the Lady Dons fell 57-46 to Miramonte.

The Matadors were led early by junior Janine Loutzenhiser who drilled two threes and fellow junior Taylor Kizziee who hit a base line three point shot in the first period to open Miramonte's domination. Kizziee worked double duty, performing the national anthem before both the boys and girls games.

The first period ended at 14-9 with Miramonte in the lead and the Mats doubled the lead to ten at the half. The Dons made a mini-run to open the third as senior Kiara Harewood hit two free throws and junior Sophie Taylor a basket but the Mats' senior Lisa Katz answered with two quick baskets and Miramonte scored 23 of the next 30 points to build a 22 point lead at the end of three quarters.

In the final period, the Dons came back to cut the lead to 11, but fell short. Harewood led the Dons with 20 points while Loutzenhiser had 18 for Miramonte. Alyssa Johanson added 13.

Head coach of Miramonte, Kelly Sopak said of the win, "I was

pleased with our defensive effort, especially on the boards the first three quarters. We had a tough week with four games but accomplished what we needed to accomplish in winning all four." Sopak looks forward to the upcoming match-ups against the top competition in the league. He said, "Now the fun begins with Dougherty Valley and Campolindo coming up. We are getting healthy and I am excited to see what we can do in the coming weeks."

Acalanes hosts Alhambra on February 4th while Campolindo hosts Dublin. Meanwhile Miramonte travels to Las Lomas. Rivalry games recommence on February 8th when Miramonte travels to Campolindo.

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Janine Loutzenhiser (50)



Kiara Harewood (1)

Photos Jordan Fong

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SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS

Saint Mary's Basketball Struggles on the Road

By Bryant West



Rob Jones (22) notched 18 points against his former team, USD. Photo Tod Fierner

In the span of two days, the Saint Mary's Gaels played their best game and then their worst game. They went from stunning a Spokane crowd with a win over the WCC-dominant Gonzaga Bulldogs to witnessing the Portland fans rush the court after the Pilots beat them 85-70.

In a four game stretch that featured two games of great basketball and two games of not-so-great

basketball, Saint Mary's bested San Diego at 67-56 in Moraga, lost on the road to Vanderbilt at 89-70, beat heated rival Gonzaga 73-71 in Spokane, and were downed by the Pilots 85-70.

"We just did a bad job preparing and executing," head coach Randy Bennett said after the loss in Portland. "I was proud of our guys. They competed to get that thing back reasonable... (but) We were

never a threat to win the game." San Diego sits last in the conference but gave the Gaels a fight. Still, Saint Mary's prevailed 67-56. Junior Rob Jones, who played his first two years at San Diego before transferring, led the Gaels with 18 points and 13 boards. With the score tied at 33-33 with 14:48 to play, Jones hit a three that started the Gaels' run and put them up for good.

On Saturday, January 22nd the Gaels got off to a good start in Tennessee before Vanderbilt took over, giving the Gaels their third loss of the season at 89-70. Sophomore guard Matthew Dellavedova led the way with 19 points and four assists but Saint Mary's couldn't stop the Commodores' offense, allowing them to shoot 52 percent from the field and 50 percent from downtown.

Saint Mary's held a 19-13 lead after a three from Jones with 12:58 to go in the half, but Vanderbilt outscored the Gaels 30-9 the rest of the period and held a 43-28 lead at halftime. The Gaels managed to cut into the lead multiple times - narrowing it to seven at 67-60 after a dunk by Jones with 7:38 to play - but Vanderbilt never relinquished the lead.

The difficult road trip continued to Spokane. The Gaels have never beat Gonzaga in their building in Bennett's tenure. But thanks to senior guard Mickey McConnell's late game heroics - hitting a game winning shot around Bulldogs' center Robert Sacre with 1.2 seconds to play - the Gaels man-

aged a stunning victory that silenced the rarely silent Kennel. Gonzaga was 44-1 in conference play at home to that point - losing only once before, to the Gaels in 1995.

"Gonzaga is a good team," Bennett said afterwards. "I felt like we beat a good Gonzaga team. We played well... we are happy as heck to get out of here with a win."

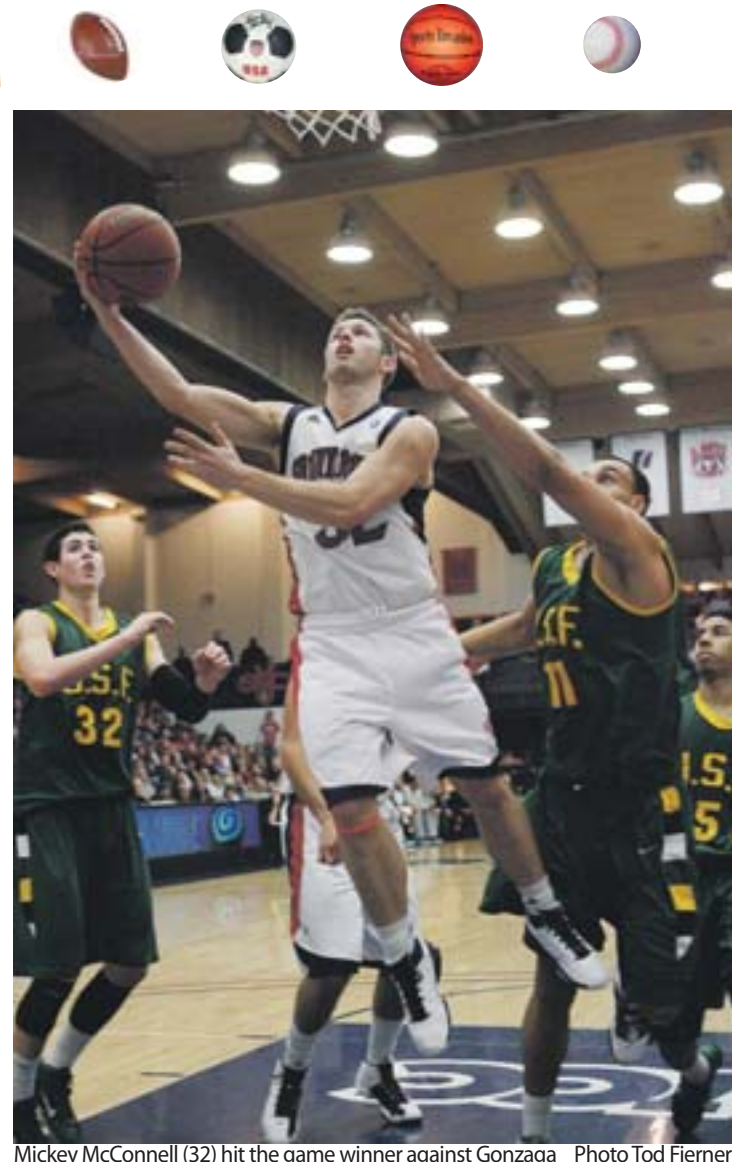
McConnell led the Gaels with 27 points, six assists and four boards, while Jones added 15 points and 13 boards. Sacre led the 17 and eight boards, while guard Steven Gray had 14 before fouling out with four minutes to play.

"We wanted to get one shot and that was the last shot so that was the main thing," McConnell said. "We wanted to switch Sacre and get the mismatch."

That was exactly what the Gaels got. Zags' guard Marquise Carter hit two free throws with 10 seconds to play that tied the game at 71-71. McConnell took the ball up, and a screen later found himself guarded by Sacre. He curved his body around the seven-foot center, shot a 10 foot jumper off-handed, and hit the game winner with 1.2 seconds to play.

But perhaps the victory over rival Gonzaga left the Gaels a little bit on the weary side as they lost to Portland 85-70 on Saturday. Portland used a 27-2 run to start the second half that buried the Gaels, and the Saint Mary's run - the Gaels cut it to eight at 76-68 with 51 seconds left in the game - came too late.

When asked if the tough trip



Mickey McConnell (32) hit the game winner against Gonzaga. Photo Tod Fierner

had fatigued the Gaels, McConnell said he didn't think it had. "I think our guys felt alright. It is just a normal road trip... We really just didn't defend and do the little things we needed to do to get this win."

To the Pilots' credit, they have bested the Gaels in each of their past two meetings in Portland, but have both years been knocked out of the Conference tournament by Saint Mary's. McConnell had a career night, scoring 32 in the loss

but the Gaels shot just 39 percent from the field.

The Gaels sit at 6-1 in conference, one game ahead of second place San Francisco at 5-2. Both Santa Clara and Gonzaga have a 4-3 conference record, but the Broncos currently rest in third thanks to win over the Zags earlier this month. Saint Mary's returns home this week, taking on Pepperdine on Thursday and a Saturday matchup with Loyola Marymount.

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Masters Swimmers Finish Top in "Go The Distance" Event

Submitted by Richard K. Jacobberger



After a workout at Oakwood Athletic Club Photo provided

Lafayette City Council member and former Mayor Don Tatzin (58) was the overall champion for the 2010 United States Masters Swimming (USMS) "Go The Distance" event. Tatzin finished first in the nation having swam 1,798.18 miles in 2010. He improved on

his 1,543.21 miles from 2009 which also qualified him for first place. Tatzin was the only swimmer to exceed 1,500 miles.

Susan Skilton (52) swam 735.42 miles to finish 42nd overall and fourth in her age group. Skilton was one of only

209 swimmers nationwide to exceed 500 miles this year.

The "Go The Distance" event is the fastest growing USMS program, doubling participation ever year; more than 2,200 members participate logging a total of over 425,000 miles.

The event is a self-di-

rected program aimed at encouraging Masters swimmers to exercise regularly. There is no time limit for the distance milestones. The program is based on the honor system with swimmers logging the distance swam on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

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SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS

It Only Takes One

Dons defeat rival Campolindo, 1-0

By Alex Crook



Sam Palano (25) struggles with Bryan Berlier (3) for control

Photo Doug Kohen

On a chilly January 26th, a rivalry was renewed on the pitch as undefeated Campolindo hosted Acalanes in a boys' soccer matchup.

The Cougars came into the match on a two-game winning streak, while Acalanes looked to snap a single game skid, a loss to Berkeley. Campo sat atop the DFAL standings having defeated the Dons in their December 10th matchup, while the Dons came into the match at number two; things were about to change.

There were some great chances for both teams in the opening forty minutes, as both the Dons and Cougars went back and forth

exchanging missed opportunities.

Late in the opening half, Campo senior captain Jaison Kimura was awarded a free kick which was blocked. Kimura quickly recovered the ball and floated the rebound over Dons junior goalkeeper Jackson Foote for a few chances, but could not capitalize, and both teams went to halftime without a goal.

Campo finished off the half with a few chances, but could not capitalize, and both teams went to halftime without a goal.

The second half picked up where the first left off, with tremendous effort and physicality. But

seven minutes into the second half, Acalanes senior forward and captain Nick Pereira received a great pass from the middle of the field and easily converted it into a goal to put the Dons up 1-0.

That was the spark Acalanes needed and they controlled the tempo the rest of the way.

Campo put together a late surge, but it was not enough to overcome the Dons' defense.

Acalanes held on to take down their rivals from Moraga, 1-0. With the win the Dons take sole possession of first place in DFAL—although each team only carries one loss, the Dons have one tie to the Cougars two.

"They had their chances but it came down to execution like we expected. They had control of the game in the beginning but once the game got going it was very even. Our attitude didn't change much in the second half, except we were more focused about defense after the goal," said Pereira, whose lone goal sparked the Dons to victory. Pereira currently leads Acalanes with six goals on the year.

After the loss, Cougar senior goalkeeper Alex Mangels said, "It's tough, but it's really hard to go undefeated the entire season. Not a lot of teams can do it. We thought we could, but clearly tonight we just weren't on top of our game. We were outplayed a little bit, and it just took that one goal to put us away."

Up next, the Dons look to stay hot as they take on Alhambra in Martinez, while Campo tries to get back on track when they visit Dublin.

Fellow Lamorinda rival Miramonte is hanging in there with a 4-7-3 record, most recently coming off of a 2-1 loss to Dougherty Valley. The Mats currently sit in sixth place in DFAL.



Adrian Chow-danel (4) heads the ball

Photo Doug Kohen

Stanley Wildcats Seventh Grade Girls' Basketball

Submitted by Lyenne Denny

The Stanley Middle School Wildcats seventh grade girls' basketball team captured the league champi-



Top Row: JulieAnne Martin, Grace Deskin, Alex Grant Hudd, Hannah Roberts, Maddy Ponzo, Julia Lyons, Bella Denny, Carly Porep, Middle Row: Coach Marcus Payne Bottom Row: Kenny Souza and Grace Bolen Photo provided

onship with a win over Piedmont Middle school on January 20 at Martinez Junior High. The Wildcats entered post-season play with a 7-2 record. The Wildcats split the series with championship opponents Piedmont Middle School. The championship game was a similar battle, but the Wildcats edged out a 24-22 victory. Kenny Souza earned the MVP award for the championship game while JulieAnne Martin was selected the tournament All-Around MVP.

The Wildcats defeated Piedmont B and Benicia to reach the championship game.

Lamorinda Schools

Lafayette School District Saves Money with Green Initiatives

By Sophie Braccini



The Green Team checks the new energy efficient lights in the Stanley Gym

Photo Steve Richard

Since its first meeting about a year ago, the Green Group of the Lafayette School District has been working with a single mandate: find opportunities to save money that also make sense from a sustainability perspective. Green Group parent volunteers recently presented to the School Board some possible changes, both large and small, that they say could save the District one million dollars over the next ten years.

At the beginning of the 2009/2010 school year, Sustainable Lafayette organized a green summit with schools and public agencies to start identifying possible ways to save money by using less energy, less water and producing less waste. After the meeting, the District Green Team was formed, composed of Superintendent Fred Brill, Rob Davies (District Operations Manager), school board members Art Kapoor and Shayne Silva, Springhill Principal Bruce Wodhams, and Sustainable Lafayette members Barbara Williams, Ann Johnston and Steve Richard. They decided to meet once a month and identify money-saving green opportunities for the district.

"Our big chance was that Ann (Johnston) was able to secure for the district a 'Bright School Program,' a free audit offered by the Department of Energy," explains Williams. "The result was a 175-page report that listed areas where improvements could be made, the detailed cost associated with the changes and the payback period." Report in hand, the Green Team se-

lected the projects with a return-on-investment (ROI) period of 10 years or less.

"In the area of energy, we identified \$71,000 per year of saving opportunities with a short ROI, \$33,000 of potential savings on water use and \$20,000 on the waste management bill. The total of \$124,000 a year represents about 25% of the total cost of these posts in 2009," says Williams.

In the area of energy, the first recommendation was to replace the lights in the gym at Stanley Middle School. That project has already been completed, with a ROI period of less than a year, and much better lighting quality in the facility. "This is a win-win-win solution," explains Brill, "and now we are going to expand the replacement to the entire district."

One of the elements that made the move possible was that Williams and Johnston found a no-interest federal loan for the school to purchase the lights. "There are incentives, rebates, financial opportunities that we can take advantage of," states Williams.

"We are incredibly eager to move in the direction of more sustainable ways to manage our operations," says Brill, "but I'm not sure that staff had the possibility to do the study and research. The parents volunteers did all the behind the scene project management and they have been spectacular in that work. These are selfless individuals who are truly making a difference."

Many changes have already

been made and more are coming as the Green Team continues its research and pulls other resources. For example, free faucet aerators provided by EBMUD were installed and are reducing that water use by 50%; the boiler time-clock can be replaced for about \$600 and will produce \$5,500/year in savings.

Some of the recommendations will take more time to implement. For example, 70% of the district's water usage is for landscaping. "We are meeting with EBMUD to perform a detailed review of the timed watering system," explains Williams. Another measure is the planting, in front of the District office, of a drought tolerant garden by parent volunteer Brad Crane.

With only a 13% diversion rate there is room for improvement in the district's waste management plan. But most of the waste comes from lunches, meaning from food that is sent from homes - this is not an area that Brill is ready to regulate, "our policy will be to encourage, raise awareness and educate," he says.

The Green Team will continue its work and Brill sees the parent volunteers as long term partners. "We thought we would be done after the first year," says Sustainable Lafayette co-founder Steve Richard, "but we are motivated as parents. We have no agenda, only the desire to identify opportunities while the District decides to take advantage of them, or not."

Troop 237 Eagle Scouts

Submitted by Sandra McGonigle



left to right: Kyle Weikert, John Palmer, Kevin Yee, Kelly McGonigle

Photo provided

Boy Scouts of America Troop 237 is pleased to announce that four new Eagle Scouts have joined the Troop's Eagle family. Kelly McGonigle, John Palmer, Kyle Weikert and Kevin Yee, who are Orinda residents and juniors at Miramonte High School, were honored at BSA Troop 237's Eagle Court of Honor on Sunday January

9, 2011. Scoutmaster Eric Jorgensen presented the Eagle awards, the highest rank in Scouting. Their Eagle projects are described below:

Kelly Joseph McGonigle conducted a backpack drive to benefit the Global Health Access Program based in Berkeley. Over 175 used backpacks were collected, cleaned and repaired for delivery to

the Mae Sot Medical Clinic, on the Thailand/Burma border.

John Kingsland Palmer dismantled and rebuilt two baseball backstops at Del Rey Elementary School in Orinda, benefiting both Del Rey School and the Orinda Baseball Association.

Kyle Robert Weikert designed, built and installed a large redwood shade arbor at Sleepy Hollow Elementary School in Orinda and dedicated it to a long-time teacher there, Kay Aaker. Kyle also re-graded the area underneath the arbor and installed a moss rock-lined pathway.

Kevin Mark Yee designed and built a table and bench benefiting the City of Orinda and the Christian Science Church. The project involved cutting, sanding and staining the redwood supports set in cement and transporting the 400-lb moss rock slab tabletop.

Boy Scouts of America Troop 237, chartered by the Orinda Community Church, has been serving the Orinda community for over 58 years and has recognized 180 Eagle Scouts over its history. Each Eagle candidate must earn a minimum of 21 merit badges, including 12 Eagle-required badges. They must also demonstrate leadership, outdoor skills, Scout spirit plus successfully complete a service project with a minimum of 100 volunteer hours to earn the Eagle award.

Life in LAMORINDA



Front and center: Chris Amador and Steve Hessenauer of Moraga were among many dressed for the occasion

Photo Doug Kohlen

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Lee and Grant Exhibit Opens at Saint Mary's College

By Sophie Braccini

The *Lee and Grant* exhibition opened last weekend at Saint Mary's College Hearst Art Gallery in Moraga and will continue until March 20th. Organized by the NEH On The Road, a special initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the exhibition explores one of the most critical decades in American history through the lives of the two rival generals who led the opposing forces.

Saint Mary's College (SMC) is the only Californian location where this traveling exhibition of national importance will be shown. It includes many original documents and artifacts and will feature a live reenactment, complete with skirmishes and cannon fire, on the SMC grounds on March 19th. Local schools are invited to take advantage of the material and lesson plans provided by the Gallery.

"The Civil War, its drama, heroes, and its meanings, are important for all Americans to keep in view," says SMC professor and Civil War specialist Dr. Carl Guarneri. "But here in California the Civil War can seem a distant thing, both in time and space. It's something that happened 'back east,' we tend to think, and had little to do with California. That's not true, of course. California played an important role as a ground of struggle between the North and South for the state's allegiance, and once the state went for the Union it contributed disproportionately large amounts of troops and money to the cause. This exhibit and supporting events help to make the Civil War more present and vivid to northern Californians."

The *Lee and Grant* exhibition is toured by Mid-America Arts Alliance and was developed by the Virginia Historical Society. "We were lucky that I heard about it at a conference and got Saint Mary's on the waiting list," says Heidi Donner, Public Information & Educational Programs Manager at the Hearst Art Gallery. Donner believes that the presence on campus of Professor Guarneri was one of the reasons why the College got the show.

The exhibition contains material appropriate for all ages and level of knowledge. "It is even more student-friendly than I thought," noted Guarneri after its installation on campus, "there are a lot of interactive kiosks, reproduced uniforms and tents, quizzes, and questions. A key tactic seems to be to make students, from elementary grades on, evaluate history for themselves."

According to Guarneri the exhibit is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, it views the Civil War through the actions and per-

sonalities of its two leading military heroes, allowing visitors to compare and contrast Lee and Grant as men, generals, and representative types of the South and North, respectively. "Lee was the aristocratic, Christian slaveholder with a strong record and reputation who was out to defend his personal honor and regional loyalty, while Grant was an average and rather unsuccessful northern soldier and businessman who rose quite unexpectedly to greatness by harnessing the Union's vast resources behind a patriotic fight to save the nation," said Guarneri, "They had very different attitudes toward slavery, which is something this exhibit shows and which tends to get buried in all the adulation of Lee."

The second new thing about this exhibit is its focus on how these men were remembered and commemorated long after the war. Whether they were seen as heroes or disappointments depended, over the years, on such factors as people's continued devotion to the Union or the "Lost Cause," lingering comparisons with the two presidents, Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, on the desire for reconciliation between the North and South, and by the second half of the twentieth century, on a renewed sense that the cause of ending slavery was just and overdue.

The Gallery hopes to attract school groups to the exhibit. "The exhibition is free for children (the cost for adults is \$4), and we will give tours to school groups who reserve ahead of time," says Donner, "teachers can get the lessons plans before coming to visit and we will keep them available even after the exhibition is over."

On opening day Guarneri presented the lecture, "Only a Question of Time and Patience: An Inside View of Grant's Campaign against Lee," and displays by members of the National Civil War Association [NCWA] in period costume were included in the day's program. Guarneri will deliver the lecture again in mid-February. He is finishing a book on the Civil War portraying the war as seen through Lincoln's "eyes," Assistant Secretary of War Charles A. Dana.

On March 19th a reenactment of the Civil War will take place on campus. This offers a chance to tour the camps and learn first-hand about weapons, food, army life, telegraph operations, and Civil War medicine. "Cannons blasting show that the war used modern technology to raise the level of violence and destruction," explains Guarneri, "Skirmishes in a small way evoke the noise, confusion, individual heroism, and carnage of war."



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Community Service

We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions can be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

Orinda Girl Scouts Make Blankets for Needy Children

Submitted by Mary Friese



Girl Scouts hold the blankets they made (from left): Chloe, Makenna, Ariana, Andrea, Jamie, Sophie, Emma, Brigette, Zoe, Chantal, Carly, Emily, Emma, Lindsay, Stephanie, Tuki, Kylie, Ava, and Sophia (not pictured: Lola, Teveen and Clare). On the right is Jeanne Akin, Project Linus Chapter Coordinator for east Contra Costa County. Photo Sarah Lee

The 22 juniors of Girl Scout Troop 32300 (at Del Rey School in Orinda) recently made and donated two dozen fleece blankets to Project Linus, a national organization that accepts

new handmade blankets for children who are in need.

"The girls were very moved by the fact that there are children their own age who are in the hospital, or living in a foster home,

and who would be comforted by something as simple as a blanket," said Sarah Lee, the parent who organized the project for the troop.

"This was an extremely pos-

itive community service project for our troop," said troop leader Mary Friese. "The girls were able to do it all themselves -- including budgeting, shopping and actually creating the blankets. It was very rewarding for them!"

The girls voted to use some of their earnings from cookie sales to buy the material for the blankets, collectively deciding to forego the usual sales incentives in favor of having more money to spend on the project. They then selected the material, and each girl made her 'own' blanket that was given to a Project Linus volunteer to be distributed to a child in need.

"That was the hard part," laughed Lee. "Many of the girls did not want to let go of 'their' blanket when it was done!" But let go they did... and now the blankets are on their way to children in need across Contra Costa County.

AAUW Enjoys the Dance

Submitted by Evelyn Westlye



Lois Ann Flood Photo K. DeGroot

In her interpretive dancing Lois Flood combined Duncan's lyrical, dramatic and heroic dances with poetry narrated by Karen Elise. Flood wore costumes reminiscent of the classical Greek style, typical of Duncan's performances, which were flowing and sensuous without being overtly sexual -- a point Flood made in her comments to convey the philosophy that Duncan extolled. In describing the origins of her philosophy

Duncan was quoted as stating that art and music are as necessary to people as the air or bread because art is the spiritual bread of mankind.

The dancing, the poetry and the music each contributed to produce a powerful stimulus to heighten the sheer beauty of the performance, to the delighted and appreciative audience.

For more information about the OML Branch of AAUW go to www.aauwoml.org or call Judy Hammon at (925) 253-4972.

An audience of members and guests was wowed at the January 18th meeting of the Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette (OML) Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW). Dancer Lois Flood did a reprise of the dancing of Isadora Duncan, who is conceded to be the most famous dancer of the 20th century in the aesthetics of modern dance and who impacted the world of dance like no other while making a great impression on many of the famous artists of her time.

SAFE Smashes the Record

Submitted by Brian South



From left: Volunteer CSO Scott Inouye, volunteer Cadet Claire Damon and Officer Bob Ortiz were among the many volunteers helping with the SAFE collection. Photo provided

The Moraga Police Officers Association's 2010 Stuffed Animals for Emergencies (S.A.F.E.) program collected a total of 1578 stuffed animals over the holiday season, more than doubling the previous record! Our community really got into it this year, and we'd like to thank the cit-

izens for their generosity and assistance.

S.A.F.E. distributes stuffed animals to children in need -- for example, donated stuffed animals are stored in police cars so officers can give them to children they may encounter in any type of traumatic or tragic situation.

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From Paris, with Love

By Susie Iventosch

It seems fitting, that since Paris is the "City of Romance" we invoke two traditional French dessert recipes for Valentine's Day!

Financiers, individual cakes made with finely chopped nuts—usually blanched almonds—are a delightful Parisian delicacy. Named after the wealthy bankers who, in the late 1800s, frequented a certain boulangerie situated near the Paris Bourse, the city's stock exchange, "financiers" were a specialty of the house.

Chocolate mousse is another wonderful dessert for special occasions. Not only is it

pretty, but it can also be made a day ahead of time, and you can use any flavoring you like, such as extracts, liqueurs, coffee, or fresh fruit! Mousse literally means "foam" in French and the foam comes from the use of beaten egg whites.

Whether you try one of these recipes, or an old favorite from your old "romance" recipe file...

Have a Sweet Valentine's Day!

Pistachio-Raspberry Financiers

(Makes 6 three-inch individual cakes)

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour 1/2 teaspoon salt 1 cup roasted, unsalted pistachios (available at Trader Joe's and Whole Foods) 1 cup powdered sugar 12 tablespoons unsalted butter (1 1/2 sticks) 1 teaspoon vanilla extract 6 large egg whites 1/2 cup fresh raspberries for cake



Apricot-Raspberry Glaze

- 1/2 cup apricot preserves 1/4 cup raspberries

Heat jam in small saucepan, just until warm and slightly thinned. In a food processor, puree jam with raspberries. Reheat to serve warm over cakes and garnish with any extra raspberries.

INSTRUCTIONS

Sift flour and salt together into a small bowl and set aside. In a food processor, chop the pistachios until finely ground, about 1 minute. Add sugar and pulse until well combined, about 10 pulses. Transfer mixture to a large bowl. Melt butter in a medium frying pan over medium-low heat, until butter turns amber and smells nutty, about 7 minutes, or so, depending upon your stove's heat.

*How to Pasteurize Raw Eggs

http://www.christonium.com/culinaryreview/How_To_Make_Pasteurized_Eggs_Cooking_With_Raw_Eggs

Place the eggs in a pot with cold water. Put the water on medium heat. You don't want the temperature of the water to exceed 150 degrees. If you want to be exact, keep a thermometer probe in the water.

LAMORINDA's Restaurants

... updated January 5, 2011 ...

Table listing various restaurants including American, French, Hawaiian Grill, Indian, Italian, Japanese, Mediterranean, Mexican, Pizza, Sandwiches/Deli, Seafood, Steak, Tea, Thai, and Vietnamese, with their addresses and phone numbers.

The Lamorinda Weekly (LW) Restaurant Guide is not paid advertising; our intent is to provide a useful reference guide. We hope that we have included all Lamorinda restaurants on this page, except those that told us they did not wish to be listed.

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Chocolate Mousse



(Serves 5-8, depending upon serving size)

INGREDIENTS

- 4 1/2 ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract 1-2 tablespoons Grand Marnier (or your favorite liqueur-Amaretto, Kahlua, etc.) 1 cup heavy cream 3 large eggs, separated (or powdered egg whites and pasteurized egg yolk) 1 tablespoon sugar Garnish: Raspberries and extra whipped cream

DIRECTIONS

Beat heavy cream to stiff peaks, and refrigerate until ready to use. In a double boiler, combine the chocolate, butter and vanilla and cook over simmering water, stirring all the while, until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Remove from the heat and let cool until chocolate is just warm, but not cold.

Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziven@gmail.com.



Photo Ohlen Alexander

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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 04 Issue 24 Wednesday, February 2, 2011



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian ...read on page OH6

Moving the Carefree Way

By Andrea A. Firth

Tracy loves interior design, and she likes unpacking. Kate owned her own gift basket company, so she hit the ground running. Florence had a long career in academia, and she now has extra time and energy. What do these three women have in common? They all have the organization gene—order is intrinsic to their nature—they know what to keep, what to throw away, and what to put where. And, they all work for Carefree Moves, a Lamorinda-based firm that will pack, unpack, organize, and stage your home when it's time for you to move.

"When it comes to organization, women get it. They have an instinct for how things should be put together," says Cynthia Nolan who, along with partner

Dee Vance, owns and operates the all-female moving business Carefree Moves.

*There are real benefits to the company's all-female work force say Nolan and Vance. Most of the company's lady movers are from Lamorinda, and many have already raised a family and had a career. "They want flexibility, but they also want to help people, and they all have that inherent organization trait," says Vance. "We provide a complete array of moving service support, at the conclusion of a job, you see the beginning, middle, and end. The women we work with love seeing the finished, well-organized product so quickly."

Nolan and Vance brought their own penchant

for organization to the business when they purchased Carefree Moves two years ago. Nolan, a longtime resident of Orinda, has a background in design and managed a home staging business for over a decade. Vance who raised a family in Lafayette and now lives in Montclair, has over 25 years experience as a time management/organization consultant and life coach. When the two friends reconnected at a holiday gathering, they decided their skill sets were complementary and set out to launch a business together. Through networking they met the previous owner of Carefree Moves and within a few weeks they were in the moving business.

...continued on page OH4



Carefree Moves' owners Cynthia Nolan and Dee Vance (on left) with Kate Apple (in back) and Tracy Gittings.

Photo Doug Kohen

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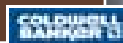


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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:
LAFAYETTE	4
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$325,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,165,000
MORAGA	1
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$702,500
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$702,500
ORINDA	8
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$575,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,174,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

- 141 Peaceful Lane, \$1,165,000, 5 Bdrms, 3489 SqFt, 1977 YrBl, 12-30-10;
Previous Sale: \$768,000, 09-24-09
- 12 Ruth Court, \$325,000, 3 Bdrms, 1624 SqFt, 1950 YrBl, 12-28-10;
Previous Sale: \$5,000, 06-09-72
- 1093 Upper Happy Valley Rd., \$1,100,000, 4 Bdrms, 3598 SqFt, 1939 YrBl, 1-5-11;
Previous Sale: \$720,000, 02-28-03
- 3384 Woodview Drive, \$810,000, 5 Bdrms, 2322 SqFt, 1976 YrBl, 12-30-10;
Previous Sale: \$820,000, 01-30-04

MORAGA

- 131 Hazelwood Place, \$702,500, 3 Bdrms, 1909 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 12-29-10;
Previous Sale: \$500,000, 07-21-99

ORINDA

- 11 Aspinwall Court, \$875,000, 4 Bdrms, 1905 SqFt, 1958 YrBl, 12-30-10;
Previous Sale: \$945,000, 06-21-05
- 390 Camino Sobrante, \$620,000, 4 Bdrms, 2344 SqFt, 1958 YrBl, 12-23-10;
Previous Sale: \$428,000, 03-26-01
- 10 Dias Dorados, \$1,174,000, 4 Bdrms, 2536 SqFt, 2008 YrBl, 12-30-10;
Previous Sale: \$720,000, 05-23-08
- 149 Ivy Drive, \$655,000, 3 Bdrms, 1393 SqFt, 1956 YrBl, 1-5-11
- 37 Las Cascadas Road, \$800,000, 4 Bdrms, 2660 SqFt, 1960 YrBl, 12-28-10;
Previous Sale: \$415,000, 02-29-96
- 30 Knickerbocker Lane, \$1,170,000, 4 Bdrms, 3567 SqFt, 1979 YrBl, 1-3-11;
Previous Sale: \$818,000, 05-09-03
- 181 Moraga Way, \$575,000, 2 Bdrms, 1678 SqFt, 1960 YrBl, 12-28-10
- 25 Risa Court, \$780,000, 3 Bdrms, 1799 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 1-7-11;
Previous Sale: \$978,000, 03-24-05

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

- 1031 Sunrise Ridge Drive, 94549, JP Morgan Chase Bank, 01-10-11, \$1,004,500, 3422 sf, 4 bd

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Moving the Carefree Way

...Continued from page OH1



While the name Carefree Moves might seem to be an oxymoron to many who consider moving time stressful, chaotic, and anything but organized, Nolan and Vance calmly assure that moving does not need to be that way. Starting with a clear plan is the key to easy set up on the other end, but they acknowledge that the process can be challenging. "Clients may have 40 years of life in their home to be moved, and the realtor has presented them with a deadline within a few weeks. They

don't know where to start," says Vance. Carefree Moves goes to the clients' next destination to determine what furniture and belongings will fit best, makes some recommendations, and creates a moving plan. "As a third party, they'll listen to us, and they appreciate the advice," adds Vance.

"The unpacking—that's one of the best assets our company provides," says Nolan. "Our professional organizers meet the moving truck at the other end. They line the kitchen shelves, organize the closets, and make the beds. That's what people love." Carefree Moves takes unpacking to the next level. They arrange furniture, hang pictures, and help clients create a new look. But if a client wants their new home to look just like the last, Carefree Moves is ready to oblige. They take photos to ensure they can recreate the same home arrangements. One of Carefree Moves' signature special touches is providing the transplants with a pot of homemade soup and fresh bread for their first dinner in their new home.

Despite the recent housing slump, Carefree Moves has been busy, and their team has expanded to include 14 lady movers. "We really focus on baby boomers," says Vance. We work with boomers who are downsizing,

help their parents move to alternate living settings, and relocate their working kids who are busy and moving up." Carefree Moves provides an array of services, and clients can choose their level of moving support. Nolan and Vance pride themselves in the green aspects they bring to the moving process. They carefully reuse packing materials when possible and recycle and donate unwanted salvageable items.

Every move is different, and each project is a new challenge, but the outcome is always the same according to Vance and Nolan. "Once we have a plan, we're set to go. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel," says Vance. "And then it's gratifying to see the client thrilled at the end. We all feel satisfied," says Nolan.

Carefree Moves

Cynthia Nolan and Dee Vance

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Kate at work packing the kitchen.

Photos Doug Kohlen

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Cynthia Brian's Digging Deep Gardening Guide For Febuary

"There are two ways you can live your life - one as if nothing is a miracle, and the other as if everything is a miracle." -- Albert Einstein

Thank the heavens for the unfussy ubiquitous jonquil that waft away the weariness of winter's dark days with delicious scents. The crocus surprise and delight us as they pop up in the landscape. I personally am fond of the deep velvety moss covering brick walks, stone paths, and benches. The verdant green carpet reminds me of prehistoric forests. The occasional early daffodil stretches its golden head toward the scattered sunshine. February's dreariness is lessened with miracles from the garden.

- **BOOST** your spirits by buying a flowering houseplant for the kitchen.
- **ENROLL** in a gardening class.
- **SOAK** seeds of radishes, peas, beans, and alfalfa in a jar of water, drain, sprout, and eat.
- **READ** seed catalogues in preparation for choosing spring delights.
- **EXPLORE** a cactus garden. How about visiting the Ruth Bancroft Gardens in Walnut Creek? <http://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org/>
- **EXPERIMENT** with more sustainable methods of gardening by not using synthetic fertilizers or pesticides.
- **EXPERIENCE** the healthy heart benefits of the ripening citrus and add the juice to your freshly picked kale, Swiss chard, and spinach.
- **SHARE** your best rose canes with neighbors and friends. If you are interested in receiving any cuttings from my prize winning roses, email me at Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com.
- **FIGHT** child obesity by growing your own vegetables and donating extras to a food pantry. If you have winter produce, share the wealth.
- **PROTECT** your hands from winter wear by applying lotion before putting on your garden gloves.
- **CLEAN** and sharpen your tools now. Make any repairs or replacements before spring springs.
- **FILL** your bird feeders weekly to keep our feathered friends in your garden during the cold season. If you feed them, they will come.
- **PHOTOGRAPH** an area of your garden and repeat every month to watch the changes.
- **WRITE** in your journal so you'll remember what each week brings to your outdoor sanctuary.
- **BRIGHTEN** the dismal days with a window box or porch pot of color spots available at your local garden center.
- **PLANT** succulents or cactus in a special sunny spot.
- **COVER** any frost tender plants with blankets or move inside the garage during the cold nights.
- **COMPOST**, compost, compost. I know you are tired of hearing me prod you, but this is an imperative ingredient of natural, organic gardening. Feed your soil and it will feed you.
- **HARVEST** winter cabbages, kale, Swiss chard, and spinach.
- **REMEMBER** your loved one on Valentine's Day with the gift of flowers from the florist or your backyard. (Add some dark chocolate for the lady in your life) Keep warm. Think sunny thoughts. Dream of spring light. Explore, experiment, experience. The splendor of the desert awaits your visit.

Happy gardening to you!



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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian-Prickly, Pretty, and Practical

“To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves.” –Mahatma Gandhi



Close up of the cornucopia of colors of succulents

Aside from celebrating Valentine's Day, February may be the least favorite month of the year for gardeners who live in the continental United States. It is wet, dark, dreary, and not very conducive to digging in the dirt. For me, February is the time to dream of tropical oases and desert charmers.

My parents gave each of us five children a small parcel of dirt on our farm with instructions to do whatever we wished with our gift. We could plant flowers, vegetables, weeds, or leave the land fallow. My brother chose to grow cactus for three reasons:

1. they were easy to maintain
2. they required little to no water
3. they kept away the rest of us

In my formative years, I didn't have an appreciation for succulents, cacti, or other desert plants. As an adult I'd like to add a fourth superlative to my brother's three – cactus and succulents are beautiful.

What are cacti? Part of the Cactaceae plant family, cacti is the plural for cactus, largest and most well known of succulent

plants with more than two thousand species growing in the Americas. Because their stems store water, they are excellent choices for plantings in arid, dry conditions or where water usage is restricted. All cacti are succulents but not all succulents are cactus. Succulents store water not only in their stems, but also in their leaves and roots often giving them a fleshy appearance. They developed in the Old World, whereas cactus evolved in our hemisphere. Only succulents that have spines can be called cactus. The good news is that you don't have to live in the desert to grow beautiful succulents and cactus.

When our children were quite young, we rode horses at a dude ranch in Arizona where the wilderness overflowed with cacti including thirty foot high Saguaro and two foot wide fish hook barrels. The cholas, with their dangerous needles and sharp barbs jumped out to grab us as we trotted. We didn't like cholas and made a note to never plant them. The kids were each given a tiny cactus in a pot as a souvenir. Over the

years they kept their respective cactus on their windowsills. Two decades later, these cacti are still thriving in the same containers, totally neglected, yet elegantly growing. Cacti require almost zero attention and if restricted, grow only as large as the pots in which they are planted.

My sister gave me a tiny prickly pear and my dad donated an agave. The flowers from the prickly pear are reminiscent of an orange sunset while the pear fruit adds zest to my salads. The nopales (the pads) are delicious as a cooked vegetable, tasting similar to green beans with a bit more fleshiness. (Note to the chef: Use tongs to peel both the pear and the nopales as they are prickly...hence the name prickly pear!) Planted in the ground, both have grown to many times their original size. The five-inch diameter agave gift has grown to twelve feet and spawned many an offspring. I have yet to attempt to make tequila but I thoroughly enjoy its impressive architecture in the landscape.

Since I'm not a fan of needles, my preference leans towards the spineless succulents. Here are a few of my very favorite specimens.

Sedum is a spectacular succulent for hot, sunny spots. With many different varieties, sedums combine color, texture, form, and flowers to interest any gardener. Many are low growing ground covers, others may

reach 18 inches or more. Perfect for rock gardens and spilling out of containers.

Aconium aborium- the black rose plant, is green with red edges, grows as a shrub to three feet both indoors and outdoors in full sun. Water every two weeks.

Crassula argentea-jade plant, is a succulent with tiny white blooms. Don't allow the soil to dry out. They are more finicky indoors but do great outdoors growing in bright light to ten feet. Great container plant, although the deer do love to eat them.

Sempervivum tectorum-hens and chicks produce clusters of rosettes which are the hens with the smaller rosettes being the chickens. Foliage can be red, light green, or a combination thereof. Easy to grow, they spread to two feet or more. Having always raised poultry, I adore this species of succulents. Propagate by picking off the chicks and planting elsewhere.

Agavoideae-agave plants are popular as ornamentals with their long, thick flesh leaves ending in a sharp point with a spine. Agaves are not cacti and they are not related to aloe. Stalks, flowers, leaves, and sap are edible. Only the Weber blue agave plants make tequila labeled as 100% blue agave. Be aware that getting the juice on your skin may cause a severe rash and acute dermatitis. Handle agaves with gloves and care.

...continued on page OH7



Succulent, Aconium Aborium

Photos Cynthia Brian

Digging Deep

...Continued from page OH6

Aloe-aloe vera is plant that needs to be in a container in everyone's kitchen. It's an excellent first air remedy for burns, bites, and scratches. I break off a leaf and pour the thick gel directly on the wound. Aloe vera relieves itching and pain almost instantly.

Schlumbergera-Christmas Cactus is a favorite of every family for the holidays. The tips of the plant begin to grow darker, then magically a flower bursts into bloom in shades of pink, red, or white. They need more care than other cactus and are worth the trouble.

Hylotelephium-Formerly called a Sedum, Autumn Joy is a favorite low maintenance mainstay in my garden containers. Deep rose enation are borne on burgundy stems with green-blue leaves. Sedum is best pruned back in spring, then it sprouts again bearing clusters of flush pink flowers from summer through fall. You can break off a stem to plant anywhere. It grows with little water.

Stenocereus thurberi-organ pipe cactus is covered in spines and can grow to twenty-five feet with numerous ribs, but in a container it will remain small, which is the only way I'd want this cactus around. It boasts a pretty white cactus flower and requires only a few drops of water a month to thrive in a pot.

How to grow succulents

There are thousands of succulents and cacti that will adapt well in Lamorinda gardens. Choose the forms, colors, and flowering patterns that you prefer. Succulents are excellent in rock gardens as well as containers and cacti may used as privacy hedges. Peruse your local garden center, ask lots of questions, and get the information you need about growing patterns, especially height, width, and root depth. Succulents prefer bright light, thriving in cool nights with warm days. They aren't that fussy about soil as long as it drains well. Add sand or perlite to increase aeration and drainage. In the summer months, succulents are thirsty. In winter, they may only require water every couple of months. Overwatering is the main cause of the demise of succulents. Better dry than die!

Cacti are macho plants. Use caution with these menacing monsters. Those spiky thorns protect the plants from animals and humans. Always wear long sleeves, pants, and gloves when handling cacti. My sister created a cacti fence around her barn to keep out the predators. It works! Succulents make wonderful dormitory gifts for university students who want a bit of nature inside but have little time for nurturing.

Looking back, my brother made a great choice for his plot of land. As water prices rise, we may be wise to look to these prickly, pretty, and practical plants as a viable alternative to living green.



Who says cactus don't grow in pine groves? Pine nuts and tequila anyone?
Photo Cynthia Brian

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