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Volume 04 Issue 25

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Wednesday, February 16, 2011

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men's basketball

Utah State Feb. 19 6:00 PM ESPN2
Gonzaga Feb. 24 8:00 PM ESPN2
Portland Feb. 26 8:00 PM CSNC

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Lamorinda's Mayors (from left): Carl Anduri (Lafayette), Karen Mendonca (Moraga), Victoria Smith (Orinda)
Photo Andy Scheck

Lamorinda's Councils Talk Roads and Development

By Andrea F. Firth

Council members and staff from Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda convened at the Saint Mary's College Soda Center on February 10th for the annual Tri-City meeting. Following a presentation from the county and metropolitan transportation authorities regarding the ongoing process to develop a regional transportation plan aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Lamorinda's elected officials moved on to local business—roads and development.

Funding road and storm drain repairs is a problem for all three communities. Orinda Mayor Victoria Smith reported that the estimated cost of her city's road re-

pair needs tops \$100 million. Scarce city funds, a little more than 10% of the city's operating budget annually, are reserved for fixing arterial and collector roads. Neighborhood streets are repaired only in emergency situations. "We have had some success in repairing roads with grants monies, but we still face a significant challenge," said Smith. She added that there were no plans to pursue a tax measure to fund road repairs in the current economic environment.

Mayor Carl Anduri said Lafayette's current road repair backlog totals \$15.5 million. ... continued on page A2

Quote of the Week:

"Our schools' positive impact on property values helps all homeowners – with or without children." Read Letters to the Editor, page A8

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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Discover & Go: Free Museum Passes

By Cathy Tyson



Robi Duncan and Jing Jing Huang at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center
Photo Cathy Tyson

In a groundbreaking new program, The Contra Costa Library System is offering complimentary museum passes for twenty-three museums and cultural institutions all around the Bay Area to patrons with their Discover & Go program. A fun, free and educational outing is just a few clicks away. Passes are similar to airplane boarding passes, just print and present it at the venue.

From the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco and the Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito to the USS Hornet in Alameda and beyond – Contra Costa County residents with a library card can print free passes for a particular day, that don't need to be returned and will never be overdue. The list of participating venues keeps growing, see box below for current destinations.

... continued on page A3

Wednesday delivery for Lamorinda Weekly!

In an effort to get the paper to you in a timely manner, we have converted 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. Where ever you live in Lamorinda, this issue should have been delivered to you on Wednesday, February 16. Please call (925) 377-0977 or email homedelivery@lamorindaweekly.com if you have any questions.

Martin Returns to THT with The Glass Menagerie



By Sophie Braccini

It's little wonder that Artistic Director Clive Worsley asks Susannah Martin to come back to Town Hall Theater every year. The award-winning director, who gave us The Importance of Being Earnest and Rabbit Hole, and is now shaping Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie, has strength and precision that result in crisp and ... read on page L5

Saint Mary's Overwhelms USF



By Bryant West


The #23 Saint Mary's men's basketball team won four straight contests and are just a win in San Diego away from their first regular season conference title since 1997. With a victory in San Diego tonight, Saint Mary's would guarantee a tie for the regular-season conference title. If the Gaels beat USD and then defeat either Gonzaga or Portland a week later – both home contests – they... read on page S4

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Lafayette

- Public Meetings**
- City Council** Monday, February 28, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd
 - Planning Commission** Tuesday, February 22, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd
 - Design Review** Monday, February 28, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center in the Arts & Science Discovery Center at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 - Circulation Commission** Tuesday, February 22, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center in the Arts & Science Discovery Center at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Police Report



Thou Shalt Not Steal...2/1/2011 A car parked outside the Lafayette Safeway was broken into and a bible, magazines and religious literature stolen. The thief got away with a book titled "What Does the Bible Really Teach?" Let's hope he/she reads it!

A-Hunting we can't go...1/23/2011 Nearly \$4,000 in duck hunting gear was stolen from a truck parked on Upper Happy Valley Road. That must have ruffled a quite few feathers, but the ducks are probably "down" with that.

He said...She said, 2/4/2011 He said he had permission to enter her home and use her car while she was gone. He said that they were dating. She said she hadn't dated him for over a year, that he *did not* have permission to enter her home, and *most certainly did not* have permission to drive his car, let alone crash it into a tree, causing \$2,000 damage. Furthermore, she said her car was a stolen vehicle and police should arrest him.

He'll end up walking anyway, 2/4/2011 The good news: "Hey, driver, remember your Honda stolen from Lafayette BART parking lot yesterday? We found it, abandoned, nearby." The bad news: "The locks are broken and the ignition is damaged, so it's not drivable. You'll probably have to pay the tow fees too." Ouch!

Townhomes a Possibility at Hungry Hunter Site

By Cathy Tyson

Although Jack and Audie Dudum still own the Hungry Hunter property at the corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Mt. Diablo, Signature Properties has an option to purchase it. The developer is looking for some direction prior to beginning the permitting process to see if its proposed twenty-three townhomes will be a good fit for Lafayette.

As a recent Planning Commission meeting Signature Properties participated in a study session along with the Design Review Commission to gather feedback on a proposed plan for the three to four bedroom units in three stories, two levels over a garage on the parcel.

The acre and a half parcel has been for sale for quite a while – although there was some initial interest from Bev Mo, In and Out Burger, and a medical building - none have followed through.

Signature Properties is looking into a new layout of the townhomes arranged surrounding a central garden courtyard with the front doors and garages facing into the shared community area. Project Manager Tom Quaglia thanked the Commission and explained this study session, "really helps;" comments from a prior study session drove a significant design change from outward street facing homes to this new iteration that turns inward.

While the parcel can be called a gateway to the city it also has unusual zoning – sandwiched on the east and west sides by two and three story office buildings, lower density residential to the south and southeast and a small area of multifamily residential on the southwest corner that is accessed by Mt. Diablo Court; Highway 24 is on the northern edge and the cemetery is just a

couple of blocks down Mt. Diablo. The very preliminary design has darker colors to blend into the neighborhood and is tucked in much like the existing Hungry Hunter building to make for a subtle transition. Existing mature redwood trees and landscaping around the perimeter would shield the development from some of the freeway noise.

Although there was some discussion of a podium building, which would be taller and much more of a statement, many of the Commissioners weren't in favor of that option – "A different animal altogether," it would have substantial parking on the ground level and townhomes above producing a more "urban" feel and limiting open space to decks.

Noise was another concern brought up by resident George Wilson; he was concerned about the

ambient noise level from the freeway and traffic on Mt. Diablo. Quaglia commented, "I don't think the noise issue is insurmountable," and described projects they have done fronting busy El Camino Real.

Planning Commissioners had differing opinions and consistently declared "it depends" since a more finalized architectural proposal is not before the group, but most seemed to generally support the project. Many commented on the importance of the site as a gateway, "This is our front door and it needs to set the tone," said Planning Commissioner Karen Maggio.

"Direction was provided to the applicant," said Planning and Building Services Manager Niroop Srivatsa. Now it's up to Signature Properties to weigh the options about going forward. The City can still approve or deny the project or ask for significant amendments.

Lamorinda's Councils Talk Roads and Development

... continued from page A1

Lafayette's Council proposes to apply \$3 million of the city's reserve fund monies to road repairs over the next three years and potentially pursue a parcel tax to fund the difference. Anduri said that the Council would be meeting with residents who live on failing roads on March 1st to discuss their support of a November-ballot tax measure of just under \$100 per parcel that is limited to ten years. The parcel tax measure, if pursued, would be a citizen-led effort according to Lafayette Council member Don Tatzin.

Moraga Council member Mike Metcalf acknowledged that

his town also has a significant problem with aging road and storm drain infrastructure, although not nearly as large as his neighbors in Orinda. Metcalf said the town is working to define the magnitude of the problem and how to best communicate the issue to residents. Moraga currently spends about \$500,000 a year on the repair of arterials and collector roads.

Orinda Council member Dean Orr suggested that the public works departments consider creative ways to combine road projects across the three communities to take best advantage of available

construction monies.

As far as development, Lafayette had the longest list of projects in the pipeline including luxury condos, a senior assisted-living facility, a senior affordable housing residence, apartments, and townhomes. A long and inclusive process for development of a downtown development plan should be concluded by midsummer.

In Orinda, three model homes at the Wilder luxury-home development are under construction and two of the five ball-fields on the property will be completed by June. Construction of the 73-unit Pulte

development awaits financing; a senior affordable housing development will take another few years to fund. Community input to a downtown revitalization plan is ongoing.

Moraga was the only one of the three communities with a finalized plan for downtown development. The town's housing element was certified last year. A forty-unit residence has been proposed for the vacant parcel across from Rheem Center. A three-member economic development team is working to develop a plan for what will best serve the town in the half-occupied Rheem Center.

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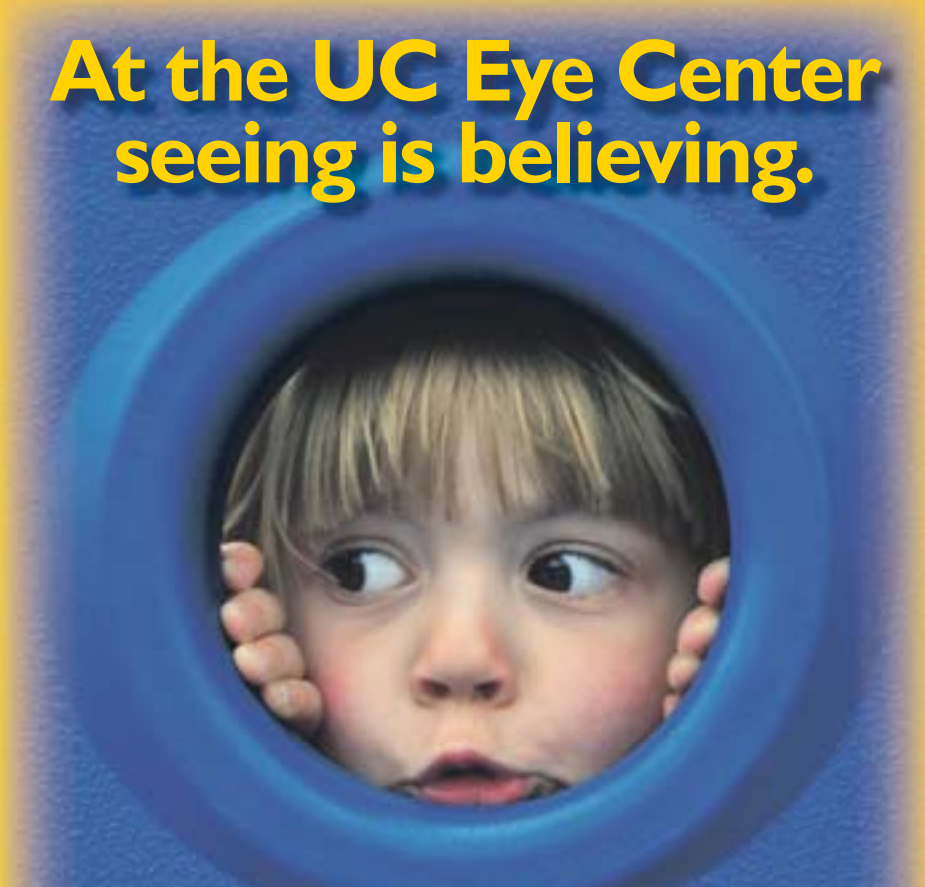




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Downtown Plan Discussion Continues

By Cathy Tyson

The draft Downtown Specific Plan marches on. Although there was an ambitious agenda of items at a recent Planning Commission meeting, only a few were addressed and final action deferred to a future meeting. Current discussion is focusing on the draft Downtown Specific Plan's (DSP) goals, policies and programs. Their task is reviewing each issue and providing preliminary direction to

staff—clarifying whether the goals, policies and programs should be retained, revised or deleted.

Due to the lateness of the hour, the vision statement was approved, as well as sustainability and residential density. Quite a number of issues are scheduled for February 22 and March 7 meetings: height, setbacks, parks, circulation, creeks, districts, design guidelines, views and parking.

The Planning Commission started reviewing the DSP back in September of 2009; meetings are always open to the public and comments are welcome. Residents are invited to be part of the process at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center in the Community Hall building on the corner. Check the city website for the agenda, meetings usually start at 7:00, www.lovelafayette.com.

Lafayette Contractor Cements Neighborhood Relationship

By Cathy Dausman



Hot steaming asphalt comes off the Lucas truck Photo Andy Schreck

A step on a crack can nearly break your back. Or so it seemed to Jim Lucas when he watched a neighbor fall on a section of broken sidewalk pavement along Lafayette's Glenside Drive. Lucas says the neighbor, out walking his yellow Labrador, "took a good little header but hurt his pride more than his tail bone." Soon afterwards Lucas, and his company, went to work.

Lucas owns JV Lucas Paving. He's been a Lafayette resident for 30 years and is a third generation contractor, in business with his son. Their company made the repairs at no cost to Lafayette, fitting the work in between previously scheduled jobs.

"That was nice," said City Inspector Mike Moran. He's worked with Lucas Paving on a half dozen projects over the last ten years, and inspected the job site. In this era of tight finances, "...to be honest, the city wouldn't have made the repairs."

Discover & Go: Free Museum Passes

... continued from page A1

"We really believe that museums and libraries support one another so everyone can explore and learn" said Cathy Sanford, Deputy County Librarian. Seeking efficiency and effectiveness from the beginning, Sanford and library staffers figured, "If we are going to do this - let's do it right." Their goal was to make passes available in a virtual environment, printable right at home. With helpful "browse by venue" or "browse by date" options along with a handy calendar - they have clearly succeeded. For customers without Internet access, a pass can be reserved by phone or in person at any library in the county.

By leveraging some contributions and using very limited development money - they applied for and received a library innovation and technology grant. The grant money paid for a software developer to create the very easy to use system.

"The (venue) partners have been just wonderful!" said Sanford, who wants to build a partner consortium. Launched just a couple weeks ago, there have been no problems reported and growing usage by patrons. "We believe it will be the most successful program ever," she said.

"I really want to commend the county library system for automating the process," said Lafayette City Council member Don Tatzin who played a key role in the early stages of the project.

"Some forms of learning occur in a library, but

others involve going and exploring. This makes it affordable for those that might not otherwise be able to go," said Tatzin. "I want to encourage people to go to the website and get started." Go to www.ccclib.org.

Current Destinations

- Asian Art Museum
- Bay Area Discovery Museum
- Beat Museum
- Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive
- Blackhawk Museum
- Cartoon Art Museum
- Charles M. Schulz Museum
- Contemporary Jewish Museum
- Habitot Children's Museum
- Lawrence Hall of Science
- Lindsay Wildlife Museum
- The Marine Mammal Center
- Museum of the African Diaspora
- Museum of Craft and Folk Art
- Oakland Museum of California
- Pacific Pinball Museum
- San Jose Museum of Art
- San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles
- The Tech Museum
- Town Hall Theatre
- USS Hornet
- Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum
- Zeum: San Francisco's Children's Museum



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Civic News



Moraga

Public Meetings	
Town Council	Wednesday, February 16, 7:00 pm Wednesday, February 23, 7:00 pm Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo
Planning Commission	Monday, February 22, 7:30 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Design Review	Monday, February 28, 7:00 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Liaison	Friday, March 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 •



MacBook McStolen, 2/07/11 A Campolindo student reported that sometime between 8:45 and 11:15 an unknown suspect took his MacBook laptop computer from the front passenger seat of his unlocked MiniCooper while it was parked in the school's rear parking lot. No leads at this time. Is not being able to face-book punishment enough?

Slapfest at SMC, 2/06/11 A person reported slapping another student across the face, but was disgruntled and swollen after being slapped back by the slappee, who then walked away. The instigator said her recently pierced lip hurt and her lip ring fell out, she requested prosecution.

Forgot to phone home, 2/04/11 A 13-year old boy was reported missing – having not been seen or heard from since leaving school the day before. After an extensive search cops found him at a nearby residence where he spent the night. Turns out – he just forgot to inform his parents.

Theft from 7-11, 2/02/11 A clerk working at 7-11 called police to report a juvenile milling around the store for approximately 45 minutes without making a purchase, then he grabbed two packs of cigarettes from behind the counter and a cell phone and exited the store without paying – for the cigarettes or the phone. It's a small store, anyone lingering that long has got to be up to no good.



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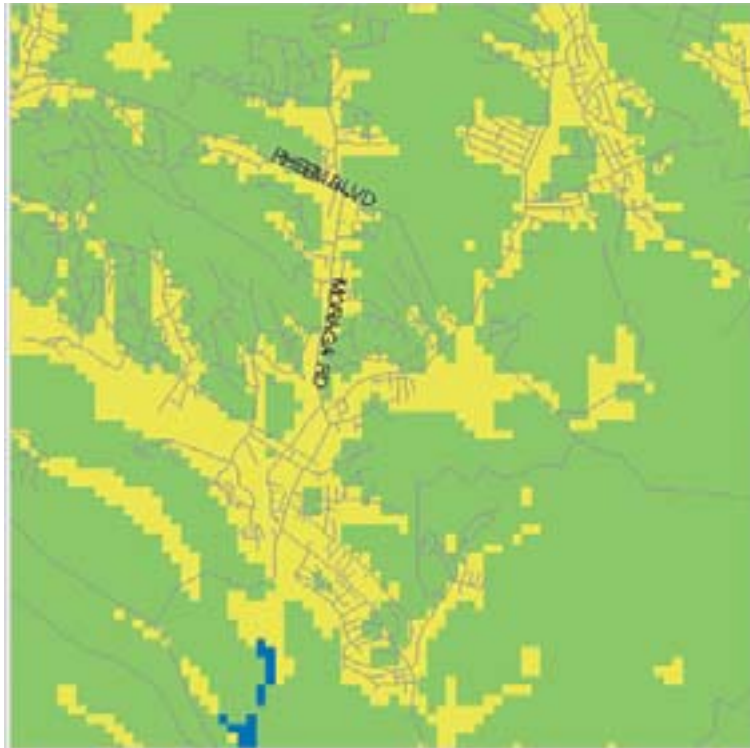
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Moraga's New Goal: Emergency Preparedness

By Sophie Braccini



The only item that really attracted a sizeable crowd at the Town of Moraga's goal prioritization session on February 9 was goal # 17: the creation of an Emergency Preparedness Plan. Residents came to lobby for two objectives – the creation and filing of a practical Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), and Town engagement in a comprehensive process involving the Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD), the Police Department, Town staff, and the public, to define adequate responses to different levels of risks. The Police Department currently has a multi-volume plan that was deemed unusable by all. A

subcommittee of the Town Council was formed a few weeks ago, composed of Howard Harpham and Dave Trotter, and is meeting with Chief of Police Bob Priebe. They are considering using an EOP that was developed by the City of Danville, and is under study in Lafayette. Moraga resident Dick Olsen brought up the issue of emergency preparedness during the first study session on Town goals. "I did so in my capacity as a Moraga citizen and not in my capacity as a (MOFD) Director," said Olsen. "At the MOFD Board of Director's January 19th meeting, I reported to that Board on what I had suggested to

the Moraga Town Council. In response, MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley stated he believed that the MOFD should become more directly involved in disaster planning in both Moraga and Orinda and that he intended to present a plan for the MOFD to do so at an MOFD Board meeting in the near future." Chief Bradley could not be reached in time to comment. The other residents who came on February 9th are all involved in disaster recovery at some level. They were Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members and instructors, or involved with Moraga Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness

committee (MNEP). "We are on our own," said CERT instructor Bruce Berman, "we need to focus on preparing our community for disaster." CERT's Gordon Nathan indicated that the town has a lot of motivated volunteers. "We are bringing information to all of the neighborhoods," added MNEP's Garry Borelli, "but we always get the same question from residents: Where do we go from there? What is the Town's plan?" Borelli was echoed by Canyon resident Jonathan Goodwin who came to share his experience with Moraga (Canyon is also served by MOFD). "The Town should prepare for emergencies on small, medium and large scales," said Goodwin, "In a large scale event (such as a strong earthquake when the soils are saturated and damage is widespread) the capabilities of any agency will be dwarfed by the demands encountered. The EOC will require personnel to run in shifts for days. In addition to inter-agency collaborative planning, owing to the paucity of available professional resources, preparedness should include pre-planned citizen involvement in such a way as to complement agency operations." He recommended inviting people from the Bay Area that have lived through emergency situation to share their input with the town. "You already have good police and fire services and you have a corps of citizen volunteers. What's missing are the policies and standards which connect them."

18 Achievable Goals for Moraga

By Sophie Braccini

At the Town Liaison meeting on February 11, Mayor Karen Mendonca declared that the 18 goals the Town set for itself for 2011 were all going to happen. At the prioritization session that took place two days before, all the goals were declared a priority and staff posted them online with a timeline. The most important ones revolve around the economy. The first category of goals is called Invest in Infrastructure. The ability to find the resources to fund infrastructure maintenance in the years to come will be one of the top criteria by which the efficiency of the Council and the Town Manager will be measured. This is one area where political will and decision-

making make the difference, in contrast to economic development, where the Town can only facilitate processes. Tonight the Revenue Enhancement Committee will present its report to the Town regarding actions to be taken this year. The meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. in the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School auditorium. The first step in the more than a year-long process will be to poll and inform the population about what is at stake. The second category of goals addresses economic development. For the very first time in the Town of Moraga the term "retail ordinance" was put on paper. Oddly enough, no one asked for clarification of the term. Right now any

business that does not present a real nuisance can set up shop in Moraga if they have an agreement with a property owner. By contrast, a retail ordinance describes the type of business the Town has determined would be best in different areas. For example in Lafayette, the special retail business district defines zones in the central area of the city, where development of an especially attractive, high-quality retail shopping area, emphasizing pedestrian convenience, is fostered. (We were unable to reach Moraga's Town Manager to define the Town's intention regarding this ordinance.) Also among the economic development goals is a conceptual

plan for the Rheem Center on which work should begin in April. A related goal, #6 in the economic development category, reads, "Assist property owners in both shopping centers to develop and enhance their property." There has been no mention of a Moraga Center Development Agreement that was supposed to follow the approval of the Moraga Center Specific Plan (which residents may recall took seven years to finalize) and define what the property owners would do to enhance the area as new buildings emerge. Work on this goal is also set to start in April. For a complete list of the goals with their timeline go online to www.moraga.ca.us.

Two Residents Celebrate Ten-Year Anniversary at Aegis



Herb Brown and Lottie Smith

Photo Andy Schreck

At the beginning of February Aegis staff organized a ten-year anniversary celebration for two of its residents. Readers may remember POW Herb Brown, who we interviewed two years ago. The Aegis resident, now 91 years old, was taken prisoner in the Pacific while he was a young construction worker on Wake Island. Today, physically weakened by what he endured as a captive, he has retained the will that helped him survive. When we met him at Aegis last week, the old veteran was as sharp as ever. "I cannot believe that I have lived so long," said Brown, "since my only family is a nephew living in Santa Cruz I continue to be in charge of my own affairs, and enjoy my life here." The celebration also included sweet Lottie Smith, a 95-year-old resident whose family lives in Moraga.

S. Braccini



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Connecting SMC Students and Moraga Merchants

By Sophie Braccini



Matt Lebel Photo provided

There are some 2500 undergraduate students at Saint Mary's College. They represent about 15% of Moraga's population. But Moraga does not feel like a college town, and some would like this to change. To that end a professor and a student, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, have launched a pair of initiatives aimed at changing the perception of students and giving a boost to local retail.

Adjunct Professor Mary Coe teaches Statistics in the School of Economics and Business Administration, and is also one of the three members of Moraga's new Economic Development Team.

She and 40 enthusiastic students recently completed a project designed to find out how Moraga businesses could be made more appealing to students. Her class visited the shopping centers in Moraga and Lafayette, heard lectures on community marketing, and conducted research into students' shopping habits.

In their reports, the students expressed their concern about the feel of the two Moraga shopping centers, which they described as having "no sense of place" and being rundown and empty. A few retailers, such as Loard's and Pennini's, offer products that are appealing to students, but most do not. The students received a positive response from store owners - local businesses want to please students and communicate with them, but often they do not know how.

Enter Saint Mary's sophomore Matt Lebel, who has been involved with the marketing of Moraga's Captain Vineyard since his freshman year. The work he did for the Captains inspired him to become an advocate for Moraga businesses on campus. When he heard about

Coe's project, he reached out to her class and teamed up with some of the students to create MarketMoraga.com, a Facebook and internet-based marketing concept. The Moraga Chamber of Commerce helped drum up support.

The survey that Coe's team conducted indicates that the number one information vehicle for the students is Facebook, accessed via their phones or computers. "Most students use Facebook as their primary media," says Lebel, "the site and page we created make it easy for businesses to track specific users, i.e. Saint Mary's students, and design ad campaigns that are made just for them."

For \$40 a month, participating businesses get a presence on the website and Facebook page. One of the keys to the success of the site is that students work with businesses to create ads with special offers designed to attract students. In order for this to work, businesses need to participate and students need to "like" the Facebook page so they can receive the offers directly in their news feed. "My objective is to get 500 'likes' in the first week," said Lebel, who officially

launched the site on 2/6.

To attract students Lebel places ads on the Saint Mary's students Facebook page and entices them with offers such as, "Like the Facebook page and win a 20% discount for..."

"I spoke with Matt and we are brainstorming ideas to promote the theater," says New Rheem Theatre Director Beau Behan, who was shocked to see in the survey that 69% of the students who responded said they never go to the theater. Susan Captain says that traffic on her website has increased since linking to MarketMoraga. "We offer a discount for a tour and wine tasting and hope to get more business that way," she explains.

"This is a very positive and creative solution in our ongoing effort to get the town and the campus to work together," says Chamber president Edy Schwartz. "The first objective of the class was to get the students more engaged in Moraga," says Coe, "they complain that there is nothing to do, that they always have to take their car and go to Walnut Creek. We wanted to create a link between the town's businesses and the students for their mutual benefit."



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Civic News

Orinda

- Public Meetings**
- City Council** Tuesday, March 1, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way
- Planning Commission** Tuesday, February 22, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way
- Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC)**
Monday, February 28, 7:00 pm
Community Room, City Hall, 22 Orinda Way

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

Police Report



Shopping spree thwarted, 1/28/11 After running a stop sign at Camino Pablo and El Toyonal, police pulled the driver over and found in the center console and on the passenger seat multiple gift cards to various stores along with a credit card. The credit card belonged to a senior housing facility.

Car burglary, 1/27/11 Although the 2003 Audi was only parked on Davis Road for 15 minutes, an efficient thief shattered the driver's side window and took a leather wallet that had been on the passenger seat in plain view. Estimated loss of the wallet \$10, estimated repair cost for broken window – way more than \$10. Hmm – maybe cheaper to have not left the wallet out.

Warrant arrest, 1/27/11 A 46-year-old man was arrested on a \$240,000 warrant on Camino Encinas for conspiring to commit a crime and for the transportation and sale of drugs. No other information available.

Yet another warrant arrest, 1/21/11 This time on Brookwood Road, \$50,000 for selling cocaine and another undisclosed controlled substance. Nothing else to report in the police blotter – maybe that's a good thing.

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NOP of the Draft EIR for the Astoria at Wilder Project

Notice of Preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report Scoping Meeting for the Astoria project will be held on Wednesday, February 23 at 6 PM in the City of Orinda Community Center, Room 10, 28 Orinda Way.

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Residents and Developer Discuss Future of Moraga Adobe

By Andrea A. Firth



The Moraga Adobe (left), boasts a spectacular view of Mt. Diablo

Photo Andy Scheck

The Orinda Planning Commission recently received an informational update from Planning Department staff and developer Michael Olson regarding a proposed 13-lot, residential subdivision located at 24 Adobe Lane. The property is the site of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe—an official Orinda landmark that is listed on the National Register of Historical Places. At its February 8th meeting, the Commission also heard from several residents who advocated for careful deliberation regarding preservation of the adobe and surrounding land.

"The adobe is Orinda's treasure. It deserves great and careful consideration not only for the building but for the site itself," said Bobbie Landers, Vice Chair of the city's Historical Landmarks Committee (HLC).

Longtime Orinda resident Kent Long, who is President of the community group Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe, concurred, "This project will present some of the most important deci-

sions [the Planning Commission] will make... This truly presents a one time opportunity to secure a historic resource for the community and the area as a whole."

The adobe sits on a knoll at the center of the 20-acre property that was once part of a 13,000-acre land grant to famous area settler Joaquin Moraga and his cousin Juan Bernal. Constructed in 1841, the Joaquin Moraga Adobe is the oldest of the five remaining adobes in Contra Costa County. The property has always been privately owned, and the adobe's original three-room structure has been altered several times over the years.

Olson and his partners John French and Peter Branagh purchased the property in October of 2008. Olson, city staff, the HLC, and the Friends of the Adobe have met several times to discuss design, use, and ownership options for the adobe. Landers and Long both acknowledged the developer's cooperation in the process, however no formal agreement has been reached between the parties.

one-acre parcel and serve as a clubhouse for the subdivision residents. Broader community access to or ownership of the adobe would be subject to approval by the future home owners' association.

Orinda's neighbors from Moraga were also on hand to express their support for the preservation of adobe site. "There should be sufficient free space around the adobe to protect view corridors, provide room for visiting groups to assemble, and allow gardening," said Ron Louis, President of the Moraga Historical Society. Louis explained that former owners of the adobe, Donald and Jean Manuel, explored remodeling the structure in the 1960's and were told by the County that the adobe site should be surrounded by a minimum of five acres of undeveloped space.

Even five acres was not a sufficient buffer from development for some adobe preservation advocates. Lance Beeson, a descendant of Joaquin Moraga, told the Commission that surrounding the adobe with a new development of homes would destroy the context of what was once a sprawling ranch, and he advocated that the property be developed solely as a historic

site. "It is time for this adobe to go back to the public... it existed before the town of Moraga and the city of Orinda," said Beeson.

"This is not just an issue for Orinda, it's an issue for Moraga as well," said Dave Trotter, a Council member in Moraga and former President of the town's Historical Society. Trotter encouraged the Planning Commission to design the adobe project with the east view in mind, eliminate rooftops that might obscure views of Mt. Diablo, and secure adequate outdoor space for public gardens. "You only have one chance to get this right. This might be the most important decision the five of you make in your time here," said Trotter.

What's next? Orinda's Historical Landmarks Committee will review the developers' pre-design report regarding the rehabilitation and development of the adobe at its next meeting on February 22nd at 3:00 p.m. in the Gallery Room of the Orinda Library. Orinda's Planning Department expects to have a complete initial study and mitigated negative impact report for the adobe property available for public review in about a month and a public hearing on the project will be subsequently scheduled.

Council Says "No" to Medical Marijuana Dispensaries

By Cathy Dausman

The Orinda City Council moved to ban Medical Marijuana Dispensaries (MMD) within the city, directing staff to draft an ordinance to implement the decision. The discussion regarding policy options at its February 1st regular meeting was short, and the vote

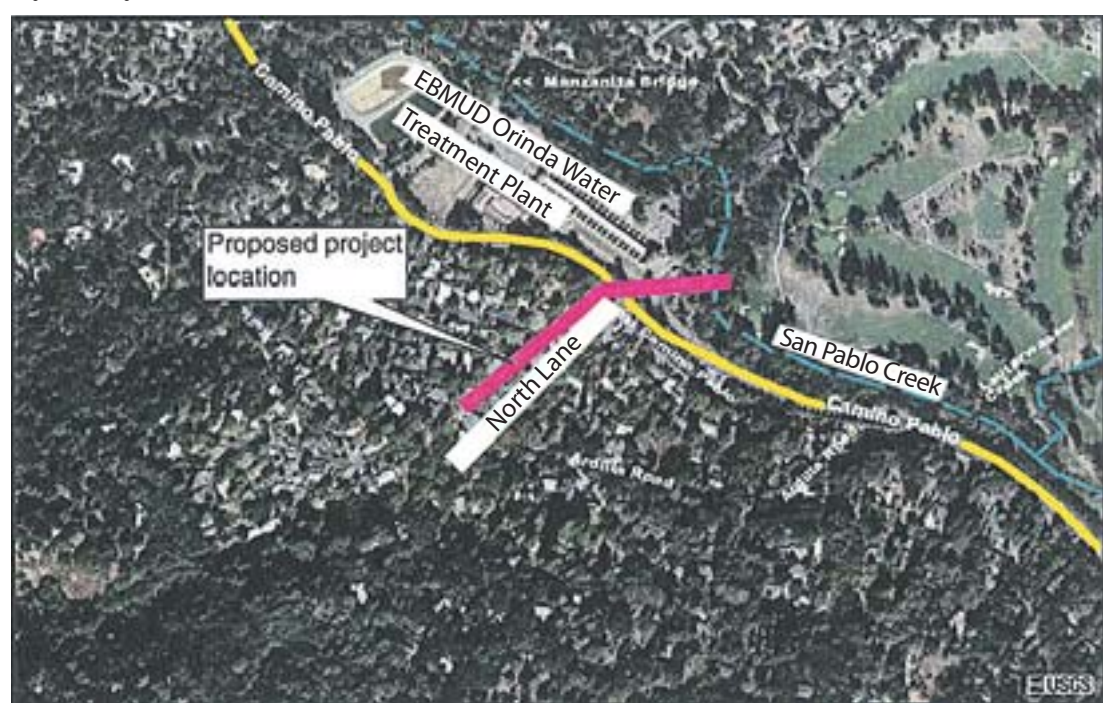
unanimous, with all council members taking part. Mayor Smith extended her sympathies "to people suffering from cancer or another illness that medical marijuana relieves, who have to travel a distance to obtain that medication."

A temporary moratorium

on establishing MMDs in Orinda took effect July 7, 2009 and will expire July 6, 2011. The proposed new ordinance, which is expected to be approved at an upcoming council meeting, will make the ban permanent.

Two Bridge Retrofits, Storm Drain, Get Go-Ahead

By Cathy Dausman



<http://orinda.waterware.com/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-3417/11020112SR.pdf>

A timeline for two of three bridge projects and a storm drain project was laid out during the February 1st Orinda City Council meeting. All three bridges cross San Pablo Creek. Due to environmental constraints, work in the creek is allowed only from June through October 15. Funding comes from a combination of federal, state and local monies.

Manzanita Drive Bridge (Replacement):

City staff expects to have environmental sign-off on the Manzanita Drive bridge replacement this spring; actual construction, which includes building a one-lane, temporary bridge downstream and north of the existing Manzanita Bridge,

could begin in the spring of 2012 with Caltrans approval.

Miner Road (Seismic Retrofit):

Work on the Miner Road Bridge, which will include a pedestrian walkway, will not begin until 2013. The Manzanita Bridge needs to be completed before the Miner Road Bridge seismic retrofit takes place, because traffic will be redirected over the Manzanita Bridge during the Miner Road Bridge retrofit. City Engineer Janice Carey says a pedestrian bridge at Miner Road will be a separate project designed and constructed after the Miner Road Bridge project is completed.

North Lane Stormwater Mitigation Project:

Flooding in February 2004 and the New Year's storm of 2005-2006 caused property damage and destruction along North Lane at Camino Pablo, and nearly shut down the Orinda Water Treatment Plant. The plant delivers drinking water to 800,000 East Bay Municipal Utilities District customers. The proposed storm drain bypass project will put a 1,000-foot long, 60-inch diameter, reinforced concrete pipe under the length of North Lane and 320 feet of the same pipe under Camino Pablo, crossing EBMUD property to an outlet on San Pablo Creek.

Bear Creek Bridge (Seismic Retrofit):

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Orinda's Appoints Commissioners

City of Orinda 2011 Commission/Committee Appointments

(* indicates reappointment)

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- George Miers
- Nick Kosla (term ends 2/2012)

Traffic Safety Advisory Committee

- *Steven Schnier
- *Jerry Gager
- Robert Recker

Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission

- *Alex Evans
- Darlene Gee

Art in Public Places Committee

- Evans Wyro

Finance Advisory Committee

- *Carol Penskar
- *Robert Thompson
- Owen Murphy (term ends 2/2012)
- Edward Jajeh (term ends 2/2013)

Audit and Finance Committee

- Susan Vandergrift

Parks & Recreation Commission

- Inga Miller
- Charles Vollmar
- Rachel Zenner (term ends 2/2012)

Public Works Aesthetic Review Committee

- *Ted Urban

The Orinda City Council recently appointed 18 residents to the City's commissions and committees. There were 11 new appointments and seven reappointments. The five City Council members interviewed a total of 33 individuals during a marathon meeting session, which lasted for over seven hours. "The recruitment

process went really well," said City Clerk Michele Olsen, "It was an amazing pool of candidates." Commission and Committee appointments are for three-year terms ending in February of 2014. In a few cases, residents were appointed to fill an appointment midterm.
A. Firth

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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 am baffled by the Moraga town council's decision regarding the Rancho Laguna development. Despite our guidelines intended to preserve natural ridgelines, the developer was given the green light to remove up to 25 feet off the top of a ridge so home construction can go forward. Huh? If I altered the silhouette of the Washington Monument or Half Dome at Yosemite to that extent, would anyone believe I was still protecting the original? I guess I'll need the town staff, the two council members who voted for the developer and lawyers to explain this to me.

John Onoda
Moraga

Editor:
I am stunned and outraged by the approval of Rancho Laguna by the Moraga Town Council. The General Plan was meant to protect the ridgelines of Moraga, and lowering the height of a ridge 30 feet to accommodate the developer's desire to maximize the number of expensive houses is hardly the way to protect the ridgeline, is it? It is an egregious abuse of power to willfully misinterpret the General Plan. Former Mayor Bill Vaughn, one of the original drafters of the General Plan's ridgeline policy, even testified to the Town Council, explaining the reasoning behind this provision and that it was intended specifically to prevent this kind of development, but was ignored. It's a sad day for Moraga when the interests of developers trump the interests and ideals of its residents.

Susan McNeill
Moraga

Editor:
When Moraga residents are asked what they love about living in our community they consistently put two things at the top of the list: open space and schools. I want to address the issue of open space.
The Moraga Town Council has recently approved the Rancho Laguna project. This is a major housing development in the most prominent piece of open space left in the heart of Moraga. You see this open space whenever you are driving on Rheem Boulevard between Moraga Road and Saint Mary's Road. It is a meadow and ridge in a wonderful expanse of nature. We often see families of deer and cows with their calves grazing on the ridge. Under the town's laws, this land is zoned open space, it is designated a scenic corridor and the ridgeline should be protected from development by the town's General Plan. It is also designated a "Priority Conservation Area" by the Association of Bay Area Governments. At the last meeting, on a vote of two to one, the Town Council voted to approve the Rancho Laguna project. This project will bulldoze 180,000 cubic yards off the top of the ridgeline to make way for 27 houses. Karen Mendonca, who ran for the Town Council supporting open space, and Howard Harpham voted for the project. Only Dave Trotter stood his ground in protecting the ridgeline and supporting open space by voting against the project.
Perhaps the saddest part is that the Town Council did not have to approve this development. The Town Attorney advised publicly that the Council had the legal "discretion" to protect the ridgeline and say no to the plan,
It seems Moraga's open space is slipping away one ridgeline at a time.

Jan Blumer
Moraga



When trying to come up with something new and exciting for my twins 11th birthday party, I decided I would put together a scavenger hunt around the Theatre Square in downtown Orinda. I went down to visit the restaurants and businesses the week before the party and was surprised at how agreeable they were to accommodate 14 kids running around asking for strange scavenger hunt requests. On the day of the party, the kids were tasked with everything from eating french fries at Table 24 and taking a picture with Victor the owner, eating sushi at Yu Sushi, buying a cupcake from Republic of Cake and cutting it into 5 sections and doing the same kind of thing at Kaspers Hot Dogs. The kids even had to run into Starbucks and order a Grande Frappuchino and drink it down as fast as they could. I was surprised and pleased with the overwhelming support from all the restaurants, businesses and their wonderful staff! They were so welcoming and generous with the 14, 11 year olds running all over the square trying to achieve their Scavenger Hunt tasks. My daughter Grace even had the entire Starbucks restaurant sing her Happy Birthday! At the end of the hunt we ended up having ice cream cake at Loads and took a movie in

at the Orinda Theatre. The kids said it was the best birthday party they have ever had or have ever been to.
Thank you to all the Orinda businesses who support our families and the fun we enjoy having in our own home town. I am so proud to say I live in Orinda and wanted to take a moment to thank the Orinda Businesses for making their day so special!
A huge thank you goes out to Table 24 (and Victor), Republic of Cake, Yu Sushi, Kasper Hot dogs, Sweet Dreams, Starbucks, CVS, and Loads.

Kristen Tehaney
Orinda

Dear Editor:
In May, the Lafayette School District will ask voters to approve a temporary \$159 parcel tax. Any school parcel tax proposal should be equitably shared among residential property owners and should close the loophole allowing owners of apartment complexes to pay a fraction of the parcel tax per unit as compared to owners of single family homes and condominiums.
Homeowners and condominium owners currently pay a Lafayette school parcel tax of \$332.04. Yet property owners of apartment complexes pay just \$332.04 for their entire parcel, regardless of the number of apartments. For example, the County Tax Collector's records show Lafayette Highlands on Carol Lane, valued at \$31,000,000 and comprised of 150 apartments, pays one \$332.04 parcel tax -- \$2.22 annually per apartment (19 cents/month). This inequity imposes a disproportionate financial burden on homeowners, more than 80% of whom do not have school-age children. Our schools' positive impact on property values helps all homeowners -- with or without children. They also positively impact the value of apartment complexes owned by individuals, partnerships, and corporations, both in terms of value and high rents.
Piedmont School District provides a model for a fair parcel tax. It structured its 2009 parcel tax so that for each unit, owners of multi-family dwelling parcels pay two-thirds of the tax paid by owners of homes under 5,000 square feet. Larkspur School District adopted an alternative model, setting one parcel tax for all residential property, regardless of the home's square footage, but charging an additional tax for each residential unit on the parcel. If Lafayette adopted Piedmont's formula, then multi-family property owners' proportional share of the current school tax would be \$220/unit (\$19/month) and of the temporary school tax would be \$105/unit (\$9/month).
Our commercial properties generate tax revenue and provide jobs. Rest homes and retirement complexes are exempt from the parcel tax. These categories should remain unchanged.
The financial burden of supporting our schools should be shared equitably among all residential property owners, not just homeowners. Requiring fair share contribution from owners of multi-family dwellings would generate additional revenue for our schools and provide the fairness homeowners deserve.

Linda Murphy
Lafayette

Editor:
The Lafayette School Board voted to ask property owners to pay a \$159 emergency parcel tax in addition to the current school parcel tax. Polling by the school district's consultant showed 70% support for the proposed emergency parcel tax.
This is just above the two-thirds threshold required for passage. To gain greater support for the measure and to provide accountability to property owners, the emergency measure should mandate review by an independent citizen oversight committee. Both the Acalanes' parcel tax and Orinda School District's parcel tax mandate a citizen oversight committee. Lafayette School District's current parcel tax requires an "annual audit," but no review by an independent oversight committee.
The John Swett (Martinez) and Lafayette school districts both are conducting special elections on May 3. The county's election division website shows that John Swett's ballot language includes a "citizen oversight committee." Lafayette's does not. Given the amount of money property owners are asked to pay, a citizen oversight committee should be mandated to ensure the parcel tax proceeds are spent only for the designated purposes.

Bryan Tong
Lafayette

Join our Public Forum

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda or one of its cities that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public Forum section. Just send your letter to letters@lamorindaweekly.com and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum.



Lamorinda Schools & Sports



Photo courtesy Lisa Evaristo

And the winners are:

- Best of Show:** Teriyaki Chicken Bowl – Steven Williams
- Fun Kids Foods:** Loveable Lasagna – Jenna Evaristo
- Simple Kid Friendly Prep:** Taco Casserole - Michaela Sasner
- Health Conscious Foods:** Cole's Rockin' Chili – Cole Brightbill
- Judges Choice:** Panko Chicken – Jeremy Hathaway
- Plate Presentation:** Super Cheesy Mini Lasagna Cups of Awesomeness – Claire McNally

Everyone's a Winner at Kids Can Cook Contest

By Cathy Tyson

With complimentary chef's jackets - sleeve roll up required, hat and rubber gloves – the contest was on. The six finalists, selected from 35 entries, suited up to prepare for the "Kids Can Cook" contest at Burton Valley Elementary School. This year's theme was "healthy lunches." The contest was open to all third through fifth graders, with an equal number of boys and girls submitting entries.

"The kids were challenged to be creative and healthy," said Hot Lunch Coordinator Lisa Evaristo. "It's part of what Sodexo and I are trying to really promote: healthy fresh food. On a personal note, I am

just thrilled that these kids are learning to actually cook - not just heat packaged food!" Students had to come up with a recipe, make sure it was nutritious and something their fellow students would actually eat, and able to be reproduced in the school kitchen. The winner will have his or her dish served during April for hot lunch.

With assistance from John Scatena, General Manager of the Schools Division and the Sodexo food service team, trays with pre-chopped vegetables and all the ingredients from their submitted recipes were presented to the students at their respective tables set

up in the multipurpose room. Although they were supervised, the kids had to assemble their dish, cook it and serve it to a distinguished panel of judges.

A number of parents mentioned there was a fair amount of practicing at home, and that they're ready to try something new for dinner.

At one point there was a noodle emergency – the cooked noodles were sticking together for Loveable Lasagna. The nimble fingers of an adult chef saved the day.

Many of the young chefs seemed excited but quickly settled into the task at hand. Their fellow

students came in to check out the proceedings, and quite a few parents were on hand to take pictures. There was an hour and a half time limit to prepare and serve their lunch.

Comments on the finished products ranged from, "Crunchy and delectable" to "extra zesty." Although the competition was fierce, students gathered for the judging and gave a big round of applause for all the finalists, who received a reusable tote bag, whisks, kitchen towels, wooden spoons, potholders and a reusable water bottle. Turns out – everyone's a winner.

Sister to Sister Summit: The Perspective of a Big Sister

Submitted by Jen Vaccaro



Girls having fun at the 2010 Sister to Sister Summit

Photo K. De Groot

Middle school is truly a "middle" phase, where a student begins to distance herself from once-favorite clothes and television shows, but is still too young to earn the freedoms (and experience the stresses) of high school students.

Although those in middle school may not have to stress over final exams and college applications, they are by no means exempt from the feeling. In the organization Sister to Sister, local high school girls plan a day, every spring, for

middle school girls from around the area to come together and share their stories.

After I attended Sister to Sister as a middle school student, just a few years ago, I remember thinking that as much as I loved all my friends at Stanley, my own middle school, there was something special and novel about becoming friends with girls from other schools as well. Whether it was because they could provide a different perspective on situations, or because these

friendships reminded me that I was not confined within the borders of my own school, the friends I made at Sister to Sister are still a big part of my life.

Now in high school, I have become a facilitator for the Summit. Over a six-month period, a group of us are mentored by women from the American Association of University Women (AAUW), planning the Summit and working on our facilitation and communication skills. We have arranged a day of fun and have created a chance for local middle school girls to bond with others of their own age in an open, "clique-free" setting.

Because the Summit is filled with time to talk over tasty food, social games and more intimate and safe discussion groups, the relationships formed can come from sharing in each other's laughter but also hearing about each other's struggles.

Not only are the middle school girls able to form relationships with one another, but with the high school girls as well. The high school girls share their experience of how to get through the challenges of middle school and how to prepare for high school.

A past participant, Tara B., recently noted, "I was unsure about what to expect in high school and a bit intimidated by the upper classmen. However, after talking with the high school facilitators in my discussion group at Sister to Sister, I was able to enter high school feeling prepared and confident. It was also cool that on my first day of high school my I saw my facilitator, who to me was no longer an intimidating upper classman, but a friend."

Although there is only one Summit day a year, the experiences of Sister to Sister can last far beyond the day. This year's Sister to Sister Summit will be held on March 19th from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Bentley School in Lafayette. The registration deadline is March 12. To sign up or get more information, go to www.sister2sister.info.

Lafayette Elementary International Night

Submitted by Paulie Proffett



Lafayette Elementary School's annual International Night was held on Wednesday, January 26. A variety of performances and crafts were enjoyed by all. Support for the crafts came from Storycraft and Sew Now, both in Lafayette, and by the Contra Costa Chinese School.

Contra Costa Chinese School Ribbon Dancers (Concord) Photo provided

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Lamorinda Schools

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Acalanes Union
High School District
Board Room AUHSD Office
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette
TONIGHT: Wednesday, February 16, 7:30pm
Next: Wednesday, March 9, 7:30pm

Lafayette School District
LAFSD Office
3477 School Street, Lafayette
Wednesday, March 9, 7pm

Orinda Union School District
OUSD Office
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda
Monday, March 7, 4pm

Moraga School District
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
Tuesday, March 8, at 7:30pm

Registration for Moraga students entering Kindergarten for the 2011-2012 school year
Moraga – March 3-4 at these schools and times:
Camino Pablo Elementary
9-11:45am, & 1:15-3:00pm, 1111 Camino Pablo, 376-4435
Los Perales Elementary
9am-2pm, 22 Wakefield Drive, 631-0105
Rheem Elementary
9am-2pm
90 Laird Drive, 376-4441
Information regarding Moraga registration requirements is available at www.moraga.k12.ca.us.

Troop 219 Eagles

Submitted by Dawn Svedberg



Pepel, Svedberg and Morley

Photo provided

Three Boy Scouts from Troop 219 were recently honored at and Eagle Court of Honor ceremony held at the Lafayette United Methodist Church in Lafayette on January 2nd and led by former Scoutmaster, Stig Svedberg. After many years of diligent work,

Matthieu Pepel, Erik Svedberg and Calvin Morley have attained the Eagle Scout rank which is the highest available rank in the Boy Scouts of America. They will maintain the title of Eagle Scout for life.

For his Eagle Project, Matthieu Pepel refurbished a set of

bleachers for the Acalanes High School swimming pool. The project was funded by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. Matthieu is a senior at Acalanes High School.

Erik Svedberg's Eagle Project entailed constructing and installing numerous directional sign posts around the Lafayette Community Fields to help guide visitors along its many winding and hidden trails. Erik is a senior at Campolindo High School.

Calvin Morley's Eagle Project involved building benches for a low income housing community in Pleasant Hill. Calvin worked with Contra Costa Interfaith Housing. This group, who owns the apartments, asked for benches for the courtyard where the children like to play. Calvin graduated from Bentley School in Lafayette in 2010.

Sea Scout Receives Award

Submitted by Carol Lindenhayn



Taylor Lindenhayn Photo provided

Acalanes High School Junior Taylor Lindenhayn, 16, has been selected to receive the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), 2010 Venturing Leadership Award from the local BSA Council. The award is given annually to teens and adults who have made exceptional contributions to BSA programs. Lindenhayn is being recognized for her service and leadership with her Sea Scout ship, the S.S.S. Sea Witch which is based in Martinez. The award will be presented at the Mount Diablo Silverado Council's annual dinner at the Walnut Creek Marriott Hotel on Friday February

18th. Sea Scouts is a non-profit co-ed youth maritime program. Teens learn how to operate and maintain large ships and small boats such as sailboats, kayaks and canoes while gaining leadership skills and seamanship skills in areas such as water safety, knot tying, weather, first aid, navigation, firefighting, engineering, engine repair, compass, radio communications and sailing. No experience is required. For more information contact Rolf Lindenhayn at lindenhayn@sbc-global.net or 917-0573 or go to www.seascout.org.

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Lamorinda Weekly is looking for journalists to report on civic & school news. You will be paid per article published.
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Miramonte Drama Brings it Home to OIS

By Lou Fancher



Miramonte High School drama students "on the bus" in a bullying play at OIS

Photo Ohlen Alexander

If the arts in education movement needs a fresh argument for why drama, music and visual arts should remain a part of K-12 public schools, a group of Miramonte High School (MHS) theater students has a resounding reason: Art fights bullies, and wins.

On a sunny day in January, forty-five 6th grade students sat in the multi-use room at Orinda Intermediate School (OIS); mesmerized, as MHS students performed short plays about teenage cliques, teasing and cyber bullying.

Heather Cousins, MHS drama teacher, said the OIS Theater-In-Education program, developed in collaboration with the school's Character Ed Committee in 2001, has been a success.

"It makes sense, educationally, artistically, and financially," she said.

Cousins used the opportunity to assign the task of writing and directing the plays to her advanced drama students. Most of the playwrights and directors found source material in their personal history.

"It makes it better because it's a lot more honest to play a part you know," said Katie Rich, the director of the 6th grade play. "It's not what you think a 6th grader experiences; it's what you know."

Rich's play—about how teasing escalates and intimidates, harming everyone in its path—held the OIS students spellbound.

In a question and answer session immediately following, they

asked, Why were you intimidated? Why didn't you have more courage? Why did you still ask her out after she made fun of you?

The actors, staying in character, gave callous answers when cast in the role of a bully, or fragile, fearful answers, when playing a victim.

Seventh grade students asked different questions after watching a second play about cliques.

"Why pick on one person for so long?" a boy wondered.

"Why are you so mean to each other?" another asked.

"Would you want to be in their spot?" asked a boy, becoming a rare example of someone who might stand up to a bully.

In fact, reporting a bully is so uncommon that a recent case in Pennsylvania, involving 13-year-old Nadin Khoury, who was kicked, dragged, and hanged by his coat from a tree, was enough of a sensation to land him on national television. It wasn't so much the attack as it was the follow-through and accountability demanded of his assailants that drew attention to the eighth-grade boy.

Telling his story on The View, Khoury was rewarded with a surprise visit from his hero, DeSean Jackson of the Philadelphia Eagles. Jackson complimented Khoury's bravery, handing him a jersey and offering future game tickets.

While admittedly less glamorous, the results of the workshops at OIS are no less significant.

Cousins reported that several participants in her high school drama class remembered learning new tools to combat bullying while attending the event as middle school students.

The eighth grade presentation provided the strongest example of why kids teaching kids is arguably more effective than workshops led by adults.

Cyber bullying, the alarming, twisted practice of intimidation delivered via the internet, has rapidly overtaken the physical, playground violence Khoury suffered.

Playwright Rachel Cook tapped into Facebook's worst features: anonymity that protects bullies from discovery and a "status" language that encourages labels.

"We should chat her," replaced the school yard, "Let's get her!" And a bully's cruelest jibes went viral with one keystroke.

Cook's play hit all the right notes with its audience, who, like the groups before them, were completely absorbed by the drama.

"If schools hire professional groups to come in and do these events—and there are many good quality groups—it is expensive. Our cost to the school is nothing," Cousins noted.

"And, we spread the word about the drama department at Miramonte and give these kids role models," she added.

It's a win-win in the bullying world, where the score is rarely even.

Submit stories to schooldesk@lamorindaweekly.com

www.Lamorindaweekly.com

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- Burton Valley Homeowners' Remodel Denied on a Split Decision
- What's Happening with Redevelopment in Lafayette?
- Lafayette School District Saves Money with Green Initiatives
- Moraga Police Blotter
- Meet New Officer Mary Ann Grubb
- Lafayette Police Blotter

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Lamorinda Weekly

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Ask Dr. Harold

What is bullying?

By Dr. Harold Hoyle, Ph.D.

If we think about how a kid experiences bullying it becomes more clear. The child who is bullied feels fear and powerlessness. The bully gets the feeling of gaining power. These are the classic psychological dynamics of bullying. Other definitions include intent to harm by the bully and a real or perceived social advantage gained by the bully. The most recent bullying statistics indicate that 77% of kids report being bullied and cyber bullying statistics are similar. The fact is we all witnessed or participated in kids being mean to one another and our kids are growing up in a similar world. Gender seems to make a difference only in the physicality of bullying, with boys tending to use aggressive behavior more and girls using emotional bullying more often.

What can we do about it?

Lets start with teasing. Who likes to be teased? Not many of us. And contrary to some people's belief there is no psychological evidence that teasing builds character. Taking on a difficult challenge and working hard and accomplishing a goal builds character. Teasing and bullying cause shame in kids that they later have to work out in therapy or cover up with addictions. Character and toughness is built more efficiently when we teach kids to stand up for each other

against those that try to bully them. There is evidence to suggest that bullies attempt to convince the person who is being bullied that everyone is also against them. We need to stand up and let kids and adults know it is not acceptable to make fun of or bully people. We need to model this and actively let kids know everyone is not against them by standing with them.

But many of us have little idea what weapons to provide our kids to deal with the amount of emotional battles they have to deal with.

Strategies for Kids

Resiliency is the emotional karate that we as parents and teachers need to help build with our kids and for our communities. Bouncing back and being able to cope is really what we hope for when we say toughen up. Psychologists once thought resiliency was a thing we each had and researchers have found it is a series of processes. Social problem solving skills are key. We can model and describe how we deal with difficult social issues. Getting and asking for help is important. We need to encourage kids to ask those questions—even during those years when questions come at sonic speeds. Helping others is a key process in resiliency. This is the research that has all the schools implementing service-learning

projects. Turns our helping each other makes us better. Spirituality is a resiliency process. Partaking in your religious tradition is important for your kids to see and build a community that is supportive. Connection and involvement with family, friends, and community are resiliency processes. Encourage these interactions and connections. Families and friends do not let bullies run the classroom or the family. The following site has good resources: Web <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids/>



www.drharoldhoyle.com
Harold can be contacted by phone or email: 510-219-8660 hjhoyle@mac.com

Harold is licensed clinical psychologist and a lecturer and in the School of Counseling Psychology, Education, and Pastoral Ministries Santa Clara University. With his wife and two children he is a 14 year long resident of the Lamorinda area. He is a sought after speaker in the areas of parenting, education, behavior with adolescents and children. He has a local private practice.



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Campolindo Basketball Defeats Lamorinda Rivals

By Conrad Bassett



Mats' Kazz Tamura and Campo's Alan Hickey fight for a loose ball. Photo Jordan Fong

The second round of rivalry games in Lamorinda is complete. The boys' teams came down to the last minutes. On the girls' side, Campolindo continues to ride in second place of the DFAL with easy wins over their rivals.

Boys' Games

On February 8, Miramonte traveled to Moraga to take on the Cougars. Campo senior Carl King stated, "This was the most exciting game I have ever played in." Campo rallied from a 17 point second period deficit to eventually catch up and defeat the Mats.

Campo jumped out to an early 7-4 lead but Miramonte hit the next 24 points of the next 28 to take its biggest lead with 2:35 to go in the half.

The Mats led 28-18 at the break.

Mats sophomore Kirin Shastri hit a three to open the second half and Miramonte led by 13. Then King came off the bench to go to work. He said "It is different when you do not start as it sometimes takes time to get going." And get going he did. Held scoreless in the first half, he hit a lay up with 6:10 to go for his first points. He went on to record three steals in the period with two resulting in layups. By the end of the period, Campo was within two.

The fourth quarter remained close as Miramonte pushed the lead back to eight on senior Kazz Tamura's long range jumper, but Campo kept coming back to finally tie the game off of a layup by King

27 seconds to go.

In overtime, Campo took the lead. Junior Griffin Piatt scored twice. Two free throws from King on a one-and-one with 21 seconds left sealed the win.

King led all scorers with 23 points, all in the second half and overtime, while Piatt added 18. Senior Anthony Piganelli led a balanced Miramonte attack with 15 while juniors Ross Anderson and Jack Pietrykowski added 13 and 10 respectively. Shastri scored 11.

Just the week before, on February 1 Campolindo defeated Acalanes in a close game. Piatt hit a three-point basket to bring the Cougars back from a late two point deficit and a 60-59 win over the Dons. Campo Coach Matt Watson had called a time out and he said "Acalanes defended the play very well and it went down to the third option and Piatt came through" on a 25-footer for the win.

The Dons' had ten three point baskets (including three each from juniors Kevin Huber and James Griffin).

Campo started early jumping off to an 18-8 first period lead in the game played at Acalanes. The Dons stormed back in the second taking a 31-29 lead at the intermission. Most of the rest of the game was close before Piatt's last second heroics. Piatt led Campo with 11 points while Franklin had nine points and ten rebounds.

Griffin led all scorers with 22 points.

As the DFAL and regular sea-

sons come to an end, all three boys team appear headed again for a trip to the North Coast Section playoffs, though likely not as highly seeded as in recent years and this will be the first time in several years that a Lamorinda team has not won the DFAL.

Girls' Games

The Lady Cougars had an easier time than their male counterparts, defeating Miramonte 75-69 and Acalanes 63-37.

The February 8th matchup against Miramonte game started close. Campo led 39-37 at the half led by strong shooting from senior Annie Ward and junior Mallory Brown.

In the second half, Campo pulled away to their biggest lead of the game at 61-49 when sophomore Laura Hickey hit two of her eight points. Miramonte came right back behind senior Liza Katz who hit back-to-back baskets and two free throws and with 3:40 to go they were down 65-61.

Campo scored the next five points capped by a steal and layup by senior Ruthie Shapiro and despite a three from Mat junior Taylor Kizzie, Campo hung on for the win. Ward hit two free throws with ten seconds left to put the game out

of reach.

Campo was led by senior Amanda Forshay who scored 18 to go with eight rebounds and seven assists. Junior Annelise Ito had a double-double with 13 points and 12 rebounds. She also hit seven-of-eight free throws in a game where Campo made 14-of-16 from the charity stripe while Miramonte was only five of ten.

Against the Lady Dons the week before, Campo jumped off to a 17-10 lead after one period and increased the lead to nine at the half-time. A swarming defense held Acalanes to only two points in the third period and they coasted from there.

Ito scored 12 points and added eight boards while senior Chloe Hull also added 12 points for Campo. Don senior Kiara Harewood led all scorers with 13.

All three girls' teams will be in the post season. They have all been ranked in the top four in the Division III rankings most of the season, with Campo likely getting the highest seed: Miramonte and Acalanes will also be looking to host first and second round games. It would not be a surprise for two of these three teams to meet again in a semi-final or final game.



Mats' Carly Gill dribbles past Campo's Mallory Brown. Photo Jordan Fong

New Lamorinda Soccer Club Holds Tryouts

By Lou Fancher



Tryouts were held at the Lafayette Community Park Photo provided

Director of the East Bay Eclipse Soccer Club (EBESC), the latest addition to the Lamorinda sports scene, Shane Carney isn't afraid of bold predictions.

"With the proper training and positive support, we believe that any player, regardless of natural ability, can be trained to successfully compete at a competitive level," he stated, in answer to what will make his club different.

Carney, 25, has been coaching soccer since the age of 14. Currently in his second year as head coach of the varsity boys' soccer team at Campolindo High School, he said his ability to read the game

better than others has helped him tremendously.

"I never was the biggest player on the field," he admitted, "so I was forced to become an extremely smart player."

Ten years of participation as a competitive player meant listening to a lot of soccer talk. And it was what he heard while listening to families in the community during the past few years that gave him the fundamental ideas for developing the Eclipse club.

"There was always a common theme: the Lamorinda area needed a different competitive soccer option. Many players had been cut individually or had their teams

cut. As a result, players had to play for clubs in other areas, had to stop playing competitive soccer, or worse yet, stop playing soccer completely," Carney said.

He intends to apply his philosophy about competitive sports to all aspects of the club.

"What will likely make us different from other competitive clubs is that we won't necessarily get caught up in selecting only elite athletes," he explained. "Another difference is that we [will] focus on the player as a person to ensure that our players are succeeding off of the field as much as they are on the field."

Carney said a great youth

soccer player is "passionate about the game and wants to improve all of their skills on a regular basis."

With a June to November season and two to three practices a week—plus games, tournaments, special clinics, and festivals—youths ages 6 to 19 will be challenged.

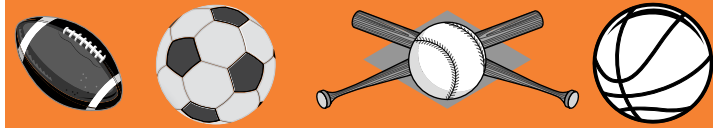
Carney is putting together a staff of coaches, male and female, with care. The club's website emphasizes that all hires will participate in interviews with him and EBESC board members, will be subject to background checks, and will be evaluated throughout the season "to make sure our coaches are improving as well as our players."

Club tryouts for youths age 6-14 in February brought close to 230 boys and girls to Lafayette Community Park. Carney relied on his game-reading skills to make his selections.

"While a young soccer prodigy is always a joy to coach, the best players to have in your club are the ones who enjoy being there and working hard every chance they get," he said.

The season starts June 20th. For complete information, visit the website at <http://east-bayeclipsesoccer.com>.

Youth Sports Registration



Lamorinda Soccer Club

Lamorinda Soccer Club (LMSC) is excited to announce the first year of a new fall season Open Development Program (DP Open) for all players in the U6-U12 age groups (K-6th in September)! Sign ups will be without tryouts. Practices start in mid-August, and league play is from September to early November. There will be 1 practice per week for the younger teams and 1-2 practices per week for the older teams. Weekly training will be from LMSC professional coaches! Games will be on the weekends. For more regarding sign ups, costs and league play for the U6 - U12 Fall Open program visit the LMSC website (www.lamorindasc.com) or contact the club directly lamorindasoccer@aol.com. Sign up now: If you are ready to learn about soccer, we are ready to teach!

If you would like to list the registration information for a youth sports club please email wendy@lamorindaweekly.com or call (925) 377-0977. A one inch B&W listing will cost \$24.



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Tennis Pro Honored

Submitted by John Sharpe



Photo provided

In January Rancho Colorado's Swim and Tennis Club's head pro John Sharpe was elected president of the NorCal division of United States Professional Tennis Association for a two-year term. The USPTA is the largest tennis coach organization in the United States, in NorCal alone there are 750 USPTA Professionals. Sharpe has been a member since 1977. Sharpe said he believes in the organization for its certification and education.



St. Perpetua CYO third grade girls team provides half time show at Saint Mary's women's basketball game against Gonzaga on January 27. Submitted by Monica Chappell, Photo Joanne Easton

SMC Gaels Home Game Schedule



www.SMCGaels.com

Fri, Feb 18 WTEN Pacific Timothy Korth Tennis Complex 2:00 PM
Fri, Feb 18 MTEN Idaho Timothy Korth Tennis Complex 3:00 PM
Sat, Feb 19 BSB San Jose State (Louis Guisto Field) 1:00 PM
Sat, Feb 19 WBB San Diego McKeon Pavilion 1:00 PM 6:00 PM
Sat, Feb 19 MBB Utah State McKeon 6:00 PM
Sun, Feb 20 MTEN Pacific Timothy Korth Tennis Complex 2:00 PM
Thu, Feb 24 MBB GONZAGA McKeon Pavilion (Moraga, Calif.) 8:00 PM
Sat, Feb 26 MTEN UC Davis Timothy Korth Tennis Complex 12:00 PM

Schedule is subject to change. Confirm at www.SMCGaels.com

SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS

Saint Mary's in WCC Second Place

By Caitlin Graveson



Suzie Davis knocked down a career-high 17 points in the win over SCU. She added 14 points against USF. Photos Tod Fierner

Saint Mary's entered West Coast Conference play predicted to finish in second place behind Gonzaga and with three games left in the season, they are right on track to fulfill preseason expectations. Saint

Mary's is 16-10 overall and 8-3 in WCC play.

Saint Mary's returned home after a tough road trip where they lost to Pepperdine, 48-69 on February 3. Pepperdine is currently in



Kate Gaze drives past USF defender. Gaze had 13 points in the win.)

third place. The Gaels bounced back to defeat Loyola Marymount, 58-51 on February 5. With the win the Gaels avenged their season-opening loss to the Lions.

The Gaels carried momentum into their home games last week against Bay Area rivals Santa Clara and the University of San Francisco.

Saint Mary's rallied from down 2-15 in the opening minutes and down 19-34 late in the first half to defeat the Broncos, 75-70. The Gaels fought back in the second, rallying behind redshirt junior guard Jasmine Smith who had 21 points in the second half. Senior guard Suzie Davis also stepped up for the Gaels, notching a career-high 17 points. Senior forward Louella Tomlinson had a double-double with 16 points and 15 rebounds.

Saint Mary's continued their winning ways, again fighting back from a first half deficit on Saturday, February 12, against USF. The Gaels found themselves down 30-33 heading into the locker room at half time. Again, Smith led the comeback, sparking a 15-6 run with a big three pointer with 12 minutes left to play. Davis notched 14 points and sophomore guard Kate Gaze had 13 points.

Tomlinson led all scorers in the win with her fifth consecutive double-double with 19 points and 16 rebounds. She also had six blocks and three assists. Tomlinson leads the NCAA in blocked shots

per game, averaging five per contest. She is tied for the NCAA career triple-doubles record with seven. She is also chasing the SMC all-time points record, she needs to average 13.5 points per game to tie the record.

Tomlinson said that while breaking records is ideal, she does not consciously worry or think about it, instead she focuses on playing well. "Obviously I want to be able to break school records and leave the school with a legacy, but I just want to play in games and its fun to play," Tomlinson said.

Saint Mary's will play first place Gonzaga on February 24. While a win would mean a lot mentally, head coach Paul Thomas said they are not looking at it as a "must win." "We don't need to beat them today or tomorrow. We need to focus on how well our shoot around goes and if we have a good prep day," Thomas said.

He is working on preparing his team for the end of the season grind and tournament play. "We just have to be better about inconsistency and the defending part of the game. We can't give open looks and we need to know how to lock down on defense," Thomas concluded.

The Gaels next match-up is against the University of San Diego on Saturday at 1:00 p.m. The teams' four seniors, Tomlinson, Davis, Courtney Dunn and Leanna Richey will be honored. It is also a Pink Zone game and the Gaels will be wearing their pink uniforms.

Saint Mary's Overwhelms USF

Gaels Win Four Games Heading into Final Weeks

By Bryant West



Kenton Walker II Photo Tod Fierner

The #23 Saint Mary's men's basketball team won four straight contests and are just a win in San Diego away from their first regular season conference title since 1997.

With a victory in San Diego tonight, Saint Mary's would guarantee at the very least a tie for the regular-season conference title. If the Gaels beat USD and then defeat either Gonzaga or Portland a week later – both home contests – they would stand alone atop the WCC before the conference championships in Las Vegas in early March.

The Gaels managed to fend off two less successful conference teams at home – getting a 79-71 win over Pepperdine on February 3rd and a 79-70 win over Loyola Marymount two days later. Saint Mary's then headed out for two road contests last week and bested Santa Clara 65-59 on Thursday and a notched a 86-68 demolition of the second seeded Dons on Saturday.

The Gaels' two home contests against Pepperdine and Loyola Marymount were closer than to be expected.

Senior guard Mickey McConnell scored 26 points and had eight assists in the 79-71 win over the Waves, while junior forward Rob Jones had 20 points, eight boards and two steals. The Waves, who sit at sixth in the conference, shot 55 percent for the game and held Saint Mary's to 46 percent, but had 21 turnovers to the Gaels 13. Guard Keion Bell had 24 points and kept the Waves in it, but to no avail.

The victory over Loyola Marymount two evenings later secured the Gaels 20th win on the season, as they survived another contest where they let their opponents outshoot them. The Lions shot 52 percent and the

Gaels 49 percent. Rebounding was the major difference as Saint Mary's grabbed 36 boards and the Lions gathered just 21. Sophomore guard Matthew Dellavedova had 23 points, while McConnell had 16 and 10 assists. Ashley Hamilton had 16 points for the Lions.

After scraping by their Southern rivals, the Gaels headed out to face off against their Bay Area rivals – the first of which came Thursday night. The Gaels survived a late rally to pull off a 65-59 win over Santa Clara. SMC made just one basket in the final 12:45 of the game but took advantage of the free throw line, making 20-of-24 attempts in the second half.

"You're not going to get many style-points games at this time of year," head coach Randy Bennett said. "Everybody knows everyone. ... I knew it was going to be that way, and our guys were able to get it done, so I was pleased with them."

McConnell again led the way with 25 points, while Jones had 10 points and 16 rebounds. Sophomore forward Mitchell Young had 10 points and seven boards. Broncos guard Kevin Foster had 25 for the Broncos. They held Saint Mary's to 37.5 percent shooting.

Saturday's match with the Dons, who sit second in the conference, didn't live up to the hype. While the Dons' fast paced offense worked well in the first half, and the Dons' tied it with a jumper at 36-36 with 19:17 to go in the second half – Saint Mary's took over from there, finishing out the game on a 50-32 run. Saint Mary's outshot the Dons 66.7 percent to 33.3 percent in the second half, and the Dons couldn't muster a comeback much to the disappointment of the sold-out crowd.

"To have a good offensive game against their team, which is good defensively, on their court was a big step for us," head coach Randy Bennett said after the win in San Francisco.

The Gaels play today, February 16, in San Diego for at least a share of the conference regular season title, but Saturday's game is equally important. Saint Mary's will face off at home against Utah State in the 2011 Sears Bracketbuster contest. The contest against the #21/#17 ranked Aggies could really help – or hurt – NCAA Tournament hopes come March.

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Life in LAMORINDA

Wonder Dogs to the Rescue

By Cathy Dausman



Argus (foreground), almost 14 years old; Jackson (background), age four years Photo C. Dausman

If you met Ben Ho or his wife walking their shepherd dogs around the neighborhood, you'd think they were only pets. You'd be so wrong. The dogs – Argus, a thick-coated Bavarian Shepherd, and Jackson, an American Shepherd – are search and rescue dogs. They, along with Ho, are members of “WOOF,” or Wilderness Finders Search Dog Teams.

According to its website, WOOF “is a unit of highly trained ‘professional volunteer’ dog teams on-call to the entire

U.S. The volunteer service unit aids law enforcement in search, rescue, and recovery efforts. WOOF searches without charge to the person(s) lost or to the requesting agency.”

Argus, Jackson and Ho have compiled an impressive record of assisting in wilderness searches for missing persons, and urban searches after natural and man-made disasters. The dogs are trained and tested for two years before setting to work; they have a useful work life of seven years.

Ho has volunteered the last 20 years at sites and events as diverse as Hurricanes Iniki, Katrina and Rita, the Mexico City, Northridge and Loma Prieta earthquakes, and the Oklahoma City and World Trade Center bombings.

Closer to home, WOOF dog teams have been involved in rescue and recovery missions including the Oakland Hills Fire, a 2001 Highway 99 fatal accident, and searches for Lacey Peterson, Jaycee Lee Dugard, Sandra Cantu and Hassani Campbell. Last New

Year's Day, search dog teams responded to a request for help to locate mushroom pickers missing for two days in Mendocino County.

Search dogs, and the people who train them, don't take the dogs' mission lightly. Although the breed may be Kelpie, Blue Heeler, Boarder Collie, Lab, Golden Retriever or Shepherd, each dog must have good health and temperament and a genetic predisposition for a soft mouth. You wouldn't want a search dog harming a small lost child. Trainers prefer to raise puppies, with six generations of pedigree to prove the pup's disposition and health.

Only one per cent of dogs are working dogs, falling into the police dog, guide/companion dog or Search and Rescue categories. Search and Rescue dogs must be intense but non-aggressive. Special training within Search and Rescue hones their skills for tracking, evidence retrieval, cadaver searches, water searches or avalanche searching. The dogs must be good athletes, and water safe.

Wilderness search dogs learn to allow themselves to be hoisted or lowered off a cliff face; some ride in or dangle from a helicopter for insertion into rough terrain. For certification, trainer and dog-partner must pass a timed map-and-compass search at 6,000 foot elevation within a square kilometer. “Suchel!” (search), the trainer commands in German to his dog, all the while being inten-

tionally distracted with incoming radio calls. Trainers are evaluated for fitness as well. They must carry a 45 pound pack and cover three miles in 45 minutes at a one mile elevation.

Ho is currently volunteer dog coordinator for WOOF, contributing by his estimate 400 hours a year in that position. An active reserve member of the Moraga Police Department since 1981, he is a retired Marine Corps officer and eye surgeon. He is most proud, though, of the legacy he's left in his children: one son a San Ramon fire fighter, another a doctor in San Diego, and a daughter who inherited her father's love of travel and devotion to the

great outdoors.

Why would anyone leave a warm bed to go out in rainy, cold weather, all without pay? Ho's simple, brief answer: “altruism.” Ho and his fellow rescue dog teams simply avoid the spotlight, exhibiting what he calls the Lone Ranger syndrome. “The important thing is reuniting the (lost) victim with his/her loved ones,” he says. The search teams simply slip away while that happens.

To learn more about WOOF, visit its website: <http://www.searchdogs.com/home>, or visit PBS's Dragonfly TV online (<http://pbskids.org/dragonflytv/scientists/scientist36.html>) to see Argus in action.

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The Economics of a Festival

By Sophie Braccini



Moragans raised their hands when prompted on opening night Photo Doug Kohen

It cost about \$100,000 to put on the California Independent Film Festival (CAIFF). According to Program Director Beau Behan, this 13th edition of a Festival was the biggest ever and one of the most successful. There are a few secrets behind that cultural and economic success – the enthusiasm of what Behan calls a troop of highly skilled volunteers, and the fact that this year the facility was given to the Festival by the managers of the Rheem Theater.

“This year was the most ‘black’ of the past several years,” says Behan, “and the one with the biggest attendance, with more than 3000 people coming to events and showings.” The Festival suffered like the rest of the entertainment industry the past few years, and deciding to move it to remote Moraga could have seemed a risky business decision. But the community lived up to the expectations of the CAIFF Board. “We had 70 volunteers and more calling in to help,” said Behan.

Community and Target Marketing Chair Carol Haag started working on outreach in November. Haag and her volunteers toured all the businesses in Lamorinda, contacted all the social clubs and reach out to everyone from Rossmoor to local day

care centers. “It was a real grassroots effort,” says Haag, “and we got an outpouring of support from the community.”

“During our opening and closing nights, 75% of the people who came were local,” said Behan, “and all our events were sold out.” It seems that when it is time to party, residents are willing and able. The other showings attracted moviegoers from across the Bay Area, according to the CAIFF management. Ticket sales represented 55% of the total income of the Festival.

The local business community played a large role in supporting the Festival. For opening night all the food was donated by local restaurants, Amoroma, Chef Chow, China Moon, and Terzetto Cuisine. Captain Vineyards sold the wine at wholesale prices, and so did Pennini’s on Closing Night. The return on their investment varied depending on where they were located. “The restaurants close to the Theater had some of their busiest times,” said Chamber of Commerce President Edy Schwartz. On the other side of Town however, in the Moraga Center, Terzetto’s Roos Pal reported a very disappointing outcome. “I will continue to back the Festival in the name of community

support,” said the business owner, “but it was not a boost for my business.”

Additional income came from generous donors. One of them is The New Rheem Theater.

“The CAIFF Association is a non-profit and is the operator of the New Rheem Theater,” explains Behan. “The Association is a venue sponsor for the Festival.” In the past the non-profit had to pay the venue, the projectionist, the projector and all those are very costly. Behan explains that one of the motivations of the Board to become the operator of the theater was that cost factor.

Behan believes that the Festival benefits the Theater as well. “Some of the proceeds from the Festival are going into the improvements of the New Rheem, such as the sofas and the new projector,” says Behan, “now we can put more into the renovation of the theater, like upgrading the sound system, and finishing the upgrade of the projection system.”

CAIFF Board members, along with most of the volunteers, pledged to do it again in Moraga next year. “What is important is that we were involved in the Festival, that the theater shows some life, and that people know that we are here,” said Haag.

FOOD TRIALS

By Mona Miller, DVM

With few exceptions, there is nothing inherent in a food source that makes it good or bad for a species. Just as some individual humans have dietary intolerances (lactose, gluten, etc), so do individual animals. Likewise, some individuals can eat all varieties of foods, no matter the fat or spice content, and have no trouble with digestion. I keep in mind whether the individual is experiencing any symptoms that might be related to food intolerance before calling it “good” or “bad” for that particular pet. For instance, from a physiologic standpoint (leaving out cultural or ethical issues, and I’m willing to risk some raised eyebrows here) there is nothing “better” about a grain-free diet as a general diet for an entire group/species.

Some disorders may call for a trial change in diet to determine if symptoms resolve. The main culprits in food intolerance are usually the protein and/or carbohydrate source, rather than preservatives, vitamins or minerals. Food trials are important for food allergy problems manifesting as chronic itchy skin and ear inflammation, and for intestinal intolerance manifesting as stomach noises, flatulence, vomit or diarrhea.

There are three main factors to consider when changing a food for a trial: the ingredients of the diet, the length of time feeding the new diet and awareness of all foods entering the animal’s mouth. This takes real commitment involved on the part of the pet owner, as you will read. I like to have an in-depth conversation with my clients before starting a food trial so that all factors are understood.

When changing the protein or carbohydrate ingredients, one must change ALL the ingredients. To do so, you should read the entire list on the

back of the bag or can. For example, let’s say that Diet A states “lamb and rice” on the front label but actually contains lamb, rice, soy, chicken and egg as stated in the ingredient list. Diet B states “venison and potato” on the front label and contains venison, potato, lamb, soy and egg on the ingredient list. A change from Diet A to Diet B will still provide exposure to lamb, soy and egg; thus the entire diet hasn’t actually changed. This is often where veterinary prescription diets come in handy – because these are formulated to be limited in the ingredients to just a couple of food sources.

For a dog, it is recommended to feed a new diet for six to ten weeks before deciding its effectiveness; and four to eight weeks for a cat. In a true food trial, one should follow this time frame with a challenge of the previously-fed food for a couple weeks to determine if the symptoms return.

ALL food that goes into the pet’s mouth should be considered when changing to a limited ingredient trial. This includes dry, can, dog cookies, cat treats and table scraps. Even indigestible items that can still provide allergens might need to be excluded, such as Greenies and rawhide chews.



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her young son and two cats. She has worked at Four Seasons Animal Hospital in Lafayette since moving here in 2001. She attended Cal as an undergrad, and received her DVM from U.C. Davis. She can be reached at Four Seasons, 938-7700, or by email to MonaSDVM@aol.com.

business briefs

Theater Square Brings More Success to Living Lean

Living Lean moved to Theater Square six months ago and things have been developing very positively for Orinda resident and business owner Sheena Lakhota. “I love the esthetics of the new place,” says Lakhota, “it is very convenient, the parking structure right there, my place is very visible, and more and more vibrant businesses are moving into the Square.” Lakhota certainly adds to the new vibe of Theater Square with the hip music that starts at 5:30 am for the bravest of her clients, the laser lights and high energy that circulates there all day long. As more people come in, Lakhota needs to think about expanding again. “I have so many clients coming from the Alamo-Danville area,” says Lakhota, “it made sense to expand in that direction.” The Danville studio is scheduled to open in May and will operate on the same model as Lakhota’s second location in Montclair.



Sheena Lakhota at her new Theater Square location Photo Sophie Braccini

nola, offering a healthy snack that tastes good. “The recipe actually comes from Dan Miskie, David’s father,” says Teichmann. “Some 15 years ago I was looking to healthier food and was frustrated by the high calories, high sugar, granola that was on the market,” says Dan Miskie, “so I developed my own recipe.” Miskie credits his granola for the 40 lbs he lost and never put back on. Teichmann explains that most granolas are based on oats that have little natural flavor, “a lot of fat and sugar needs to be added to make it taste good,” he says. Instead they base their recipe on flax seeds and almonds that have a high nutrient content and a lot of flavor, especially when roasted, which Teichmann and Miskie do in their commercial kitchen in Alameda. “We believe that the desire for a healthier life style and healthy food is a macro-trend,” says Teichmann, “our San Franola Granola business will grow. We see ourselves as a start-up, not a small business.” Teichmann and Miskie have big dreams and want to become a national consumer foods company. They made their Lamorinda debut on Saturday, February 12 with tastings at Diablo Foods, which will carry San Franola Granola.

Tri-Chamber Meeting – Make Your Movie

Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda will hold a Tri Chamber Mixer at The New Rheem Theatre, 350 Park Ave, Moraga, on Tuesday, April 26. Since the meeting will be in a movie theater, the Chambers are asking residents to shoot a video (three minutes or less in length) or create a PowerPoint presentation or slide show about how much they love their town/city. “I thought, we are in a theater and we are all proud of our city – and hey, let’s have some fun,” said Lafayette Chamber Executive Director Jay Lifson. Winners from each community will be shown on the big screen and win prizes. Moraga residents should send their submissions to Mary Lloyd Coe, 216-8904, coemary@aol.com. Lafayette submissions can be sent to Karen Rose, 284-7404, Karen@lafayettechamber.org. And submission from Orinda should go to Candy Kattenburg at 254-3909, Candis333@aol.com.

Lafayette’s 2011 Citizen of the Year

Nominations are being accepted for Lafayette’s Citizen of the Year. The Citizen of the Year criteria include being a current Lafayette resident; someone who has given of their time, money or energy to help make Lafayette a healthy community, where people will want to live, work and shop; someone who models excellence in everything they do; someone who brings this community together and/or makes us proud to be a member of the community. Nominations should be sent by February 17 to jay@lafayettechamber.org or faxed to (925) 284-7404. Indicate who your candidate is and why they should be recognized. The winner will be honored at a special dinner held on Friday, March 25 at the

Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa. Cocktails will be served at 6:00pm and dinner begins at 8:00pm. “Help us celebrate the greatness we have in those around us,” said Lifson. The winner will be announced by March 1st.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

- Entrepreneur’s Club, February 17, 8:30am in the Lafayette Library & Learning Center
- Green Committee Open Meeting February 22, noon-1pm in the Lafayette Chamber Conference Room
- Business Issues/Government Affairs Committee Open Meeting, February 25 8-9am in the Lafayette Chamber Conference Room
- Big Band Dance on February 25th from 7-10pm at the Veteran’s Memorial Building in Lafayette. Dance lessons by Gail Enright from 7-8pm and dancing with music by The Big Band of Rossmoor from 8-10pm. Tickets are \$10 and available at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, 284-7404.

Moraga

Tuesday, February 22, 2011 - 6pm, the Chamber and Mechanics Bank are sponsoring the 2011 Business Person of the Year Dinner at the China Moon Restaurant, 380 Park St. All Chamber members and their guests are invited. RSVP to Kathel Nelson at kathelnelson@gmail.com.

Orinda

First Annual State of the City Address and Special Recognition Awards Dinner on Thursday, February 24, 2011 at the Orinda Country Club. Cocktails: 6-6:30pm; dinner 6:30-8:15pm, 315 Camino Sobrante, Orinda. RSVP required by Feb. 22. at www.orindachamber.com, cost is \$65 per person. The event will recognize as Best Small Business in Orinda. Orinda Taxi: Julian Juricevic. The State of the Town Address will be given by Mayor Victoria Smith. The Chamber will also give Special Recognition Awards to Sally Hogarty, Editor of the Orinda News and columnist Valerie Hotz.

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Matt Teichmann and Dan Miskie offer samples of their granola to customers at Diablo Foods Photo Sophie Braccini

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com or call the office 925-377-0977

A Writer's Place: Lafayette Library and Learning Center Hosts Group of Budding Writers

By Moya Stone

A Sunday visitor to the Lafayette Library and Learning Center might spot in the Teen Center a group of animated men and women sitting in a circle, laughing and clearly having a good time. Who are these jovial folks? They are local writers, part of a new group called A Writer's Place.

A Writer's Place is just that – a space and opportunity for budding scribes to regularly meet and discuss the craft of writing. Started late last year by Lafayette resident and author Gloria Lenhart, the group supports one another by discussing their own crafting challenges. Moderated by Lenhart, the writers also share writing strategies, publishing tips and research resources. Additionally, participants have the option to exchange manuscripts and critique each other's work.

Called Writers Open House, the meetings happen once a month on Sunday afternoon. Among the writers gathered recently is

Lafayette resident Dudley Braun, who is working on a non-fiction piece and looking for tips on how to write a book proposal. Shelley Koon from Martinez writes young adult fiction and shares information on e-publishing and the importance of social networking for writers. Lenhart begins with a particular topic, such as how to get started writing, but the discussions take on a life of their own as any good conversation does.

Moraga resident Danielle Vanaman is working on a collection of personal essays and excited to be attending for the first time the upcoming San Francisco Writers Conference. Those in the group who have attended the popular event guide her on what to expect and how to prepare. Lenhart mentions that what's great about this conference is the opportunity to pitch story ideas to editors and agents. Business cards are now number one on Vanaman's must-have list.

Lenhart was one of the women behind the Lafayette Library Sweet Thursdays Author Reading Series. Having seen the success of that program, she was inspired to offer something useful to local writers. "I know there are a lot of writers out there waiting to start that book or short story," she says. "I'd like to be a resource for these people."

Lenhart is familiar with the distractions writers face. Life got busy in 2006 after the publication of her memoir, *Planet Widow: A Mother's Story of Navigating a Suddenly Unrecognizable World*. "I fell off my own writing," she admits. Wanting to start writing a historical novel, she recognized the need for a supportive community and approached Friends of the Lafayette Library with her idea of A Writer's Place. The response was immediate and enthusiastic. The Friends provide administrative support and pro-

motion and the Lafayette Library and Learning Center provides the space.

In addition to the monthly meetings, A Writer's Place offers reasonably priced workshops led by published authors. Scheduled for March 6th is a workshop designed to jumpstart would-be writers, *Write that Book Already*, led by authors Kathi Kamen Goldmark and Sam Barry. Lenhart also organizes visits from local authors to talk about their writing and publishing process. Visitors last fall included San Francisco Chronicle columnists Jon Carroll and Adair Lara.

Writers Open House is free and open to all writers. Each meeting attracts eight to fifteen writers coming from Oakland, Lafayette, Moraga, Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, Martinez, and even Brentwood. Lenhart says she's pleased with the interest and support. "We are feeling our way and seeing

how it goes."

For more information visit

A Writer's Place Website: <http://www.awritersplace.com/>

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Preschools	Street	Kinder garten	Calendar	Hours	Min Age	Phone	Website
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In Memory

Wilma Mae Steele Connor



Wilma Mae Steele Connor, known by family and friends for her wisdom, wit, and global perspective, passed away peacefully on January 31, 2011, in the beautiful home she built in Lafayette with her late husband, Joseph Connor. She was 92.

Wilma was born in a farmhouse in Thurston, Nebraska on March 22, 1918. She spent her early years on farms in the Midwest and then her family migrated to Seattle. She graduated from West Seattle High School and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Washington in 1939. She birthed four children from 1940 to 1955. Wilma actively participated in the local Democratic Club and Parent Teacher Associations. She also enjoyed performing in several plays in the Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette. She earned her teaching credential from the University of California Berkeley in 1966. She taught English and Journalism at Alhambra High School in Martinez from 1966 to 1985.

Wilma enjoyed creating a beautiful garden and an inviting, artistic home. She greeted everyone with enthusiasm and interest. She appreciated and inspired family and friends in her Lafayette home for 63 years. Her amazing capacity to educate and nurture will be missed forever.

She loved reading the New York Times and relished new books. Ever the optimist, she received her latest order of five books a mere six days before she passed away from cancer.

Wilma is survived by four children, seven grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and her brother, Robert Steele. Her children: daughter Sandra Thais Connor; daughter Tara Ross; daughter Shelley O'Connor; and son Joe Connor. Her grandchildren: Brad Ross; Lisa Ross, Beth Ross; Ryan Ross; Erin Nelson; Jarett Nelson and Mirabel Connor. Her great-grandchildren: Tristen Ross; Brooklyn Ross; Gabrielle Ross; Imani Ross; Nevah Spettigue-Ross and Leo Spettigue-Ross.

Family and friends are invited to a memorial service at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 20, 2011, at the Town Hall Theatre, 3535 School Street in Lafayette.

Wilma appreciated how much the George Miller Center has enriched the life of her daughter, Sandra. In lieu of flowers, donations in Wilma's honor to the George Miller Center Concord Campus, 3020 Grant Street, Concord, California 94520, would be preferred.

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.

Kiwanis Club Presents Donation to EFO

Submitted by Sandra McGonigle



Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley representative, Bruce Berman, presented a check for \$2,500 to members of the Educational Foundation of Orinda, EFO. The Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley follows its mission "to serve the children of the world" as proud supporters of the Orinda schools. This donation helps EFO achieve its goal of raising \$1.5 million to support K-12 students at all six Orinda schools this year.

From left: Jill Morris, Bruce Berman and Joan Kiekhaefer, EFO President
 Photo provided

Lafayette Girl Scouts Celebrate 10 Years

Submitted by Chrissa Ventrelle (written by Colleen McCarty)



From left; top row: Bronwyn Hutchison, Kennedy Bloom, Janie Hofmeister, Carolyn Cole; bottom row: Erin Wurgley, Krista Federas, Samya Faiq, Emily Hopper.
 Photo Sandra Patterson

Young women in this community have their time so Lafayette Girl Scouts is proud to acknowledge the following girls for many choices about how to spend to acknowledge the following girls for com-

pleting 10 years in Scouting:
TROOP 31042, led by Geni Federas & Linda Bailey: Bronwyn Hutchison, Erin Wurgley, Krista Federas, & Caroline Colvin
TROOP 31883, led by Mary Ilyin & Barbara Cole: Janie Hofmeister, Carolyn Cole, & Kennedy Bloom
TROOP 30632, led by Marguerite Brackett: Emily Hopper & Samya Faiq
TROOP 32913, led by Laura Gambel & Karen Thapa: Emily Svensson, Julia Fel-lows, & Annalise Baer
TROOP 31983, led by Cathy Vandenberghe: Indigo Catton, Julia Partlow & Claire DeWolf
JULIETTE: Stephanie Burr

These girls have enjoyed ten years of making friends, providing service to others, camping, earning badges, selling cookies, learning leadership skills, and having a lot of fun! The girls were honored at the Lafayette Leader meeting on January 27th by the Lafayette Coordinating Team, Lafayette Leaders and their families.

Troop 246 Donates to SAFE

Submitted by Max Weinstein



The Boy Scouts of Moraga's Troop 246 donated over 160 stuffed animals to the Moraga Police Officers Association holiday collection drive benefiting Stuffed Animals for Emergencies. The stuffed animals are given to children in need after a disaster or tragedy.

Standing, from left: Sargent Brian South, Max Weinstein, Paul Ogle, Joe Zacharin, Charlie Chen, Officer Will Davis; in front: Jackson Hu, Ryan Baldwin
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Martin Returns to THT with The Glass Menagerie

By Sophie Braccini



El Beh plays Laura (forefront), Heidi Abbott plays Amanda (left) and Aleph Ayin is Tom in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* Photo Stu Selland

It's little wonder that Artistic Director Clive Worsley asks Susannah Martin to come back to Town Hall Theater every year. The award-winning director, who gave us *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Rabbit Hole*, and is now shaping Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, has strength and precision that result in crisp and impactful productions. One of Martin's many talents is her ability to select the cast for each play. Expect a powerful experience in this interpretation of *The Glass Menagerie*.

The fact that 2011 marks the 100th birthday of Tennessee Williams was icing on a cake full of reasons that Martin wanted to direct *The Glass Menagerie*. "This script is very present and real, even if it is set in the past," she says, "it is ro-

matic, greedy and hard edged. Pretty astounding considering it's his first play."

"I've loved Tennessee Williams since I was very young," says Martin, who remembers reading *The Glass Menagerie* when she was eleven, "I definitely related to Laura and Tom. The way they want to find their place in the world, the challenges of being rejected or not heard." Martin thinks that the way the characters speak makes them jump off the page, "They are so real and contemporary," she adds.

"I think that we have a fantastic cast," states Martin, "all of these actors bring immediacy to this play, their work is so present that it becomes visceral and alive. I needed four people who were going to dive in. They are not a traditional casting, but they

are the best people for the play."

Aleph Ayin's Tom is raw, uncensored, with an internal violence that bursts at times. "I am boiling inside," he says in the play, and the spectator senses it. His mother Amanda, played by Heidi Abbott, is there right alongside him. During rehearsal, Abbott encouraged Ayin to act out his emotions, "Making it physical breaks down what was getting in the way of really hearing it," she said.

Martin trusts her actors but pushes them to question Williams' every intention behind every word. "The play is impeccably structured, everything is intentional," she says, "but it is not a realistic play, it is between realistic and expressionist." The play is narrated in the past from the son's point of view; is he rewriting history, wanting to do things differently? At times a ghost seems to pull a veil over the scene and for a second the actors are suspended in time. The slight lapse in time adds to the charm and mystery of the play.

Laura, played by El Beh, and Jim, played by Michael Perez, form a very believable tandem of characters. She is fragile, and extremely touching, while Perez portrays with determination the young American blessed with optimism. Abbott obviously enjoys exploring the many facets of the great iconic mother character, Amanda.

"It is a great pleasure to

work on a play written by such a master of language," said Ayin, "every comma matters, there is no gap, everything is meaningful and timeless. It's an unlimited world opening to you."

The enthusiasm and the energy that this group of young actors brings to the play should make this performance one of Town Hall Theater's big successes. "Susannah and I talked a lot early on about not wanting this play to feel like a museum piece – something that can happen when people approach such an iconic piece of classic theater," said Worsley, "But rather we wanted to concentrate on what in the play is relevant to contemporary audiences and find ways to make the play feel real and alive for us today. The works of Williams have been branded on the American psyche and have become part of our emotional lexicon, tools that we use to explore and understand ourselves and the world around us. We're confident that our audiences will be delighted and moved by this brilliant script and thoughtful production."

The Glass Menagerie will be at the Town Hall Theater from February 19 to March 19, with previews on February 17 and 18, at 3535 School Street in Lafayette. The shadow cast composed of teen actors will perform on February 27 and March 5. For tickets, call the box office at 283-1557 or go to www.TownHallTheatre.com.

Orinda International Film Showcase: First Great Hit and More to Come

By Sophie Braccini

The success of the first offering of the Orinda International Film Showcase exceeded all expectations. So many people came to see the film *Max Manus* that an extra week was added. Now picking up on Efi Lubliner and Jo Alice Canterbury's success, a San Francisco theater has picked up the film.

The second movie proposed by the Orinda International Film Showcase at the end of the month could prove just as successful, and this time Orinda will be the first in the United States to present it to the public.

Many cheers and a few even cried at the Cannes Festival presentation of "Illegal" last spring. The movie tells the story of an illegal Russian immigrant who had been living in Belgium with her son for 8 years, who finds herself incarcerated in a detention center for illegal immigrants and faces ex-

pulsion. Director Olivier Maset-Depasse present a realistic and blunt work of fiction, based on personal research into the illegal immigrant retention centers in Belgium. Actress Anne Coesens, who plays Tania, carries a lot of emotion, while playing the visceral determination of her character. The movie will play at the Orinda Theater from Friday, February 25 to Thursday, March 3. Go to lfe.org for more information.

But that is not all for Orinda. The East Bay International Jewish Film Festival, which will run from March 5 to the 13 and feature 50 independent and international movies, has scheduled some of its showings in Orinda. *The Matchmaker* and *Naomi* (Hitparzut X) will play on March 12, and on March 13 moviegoers can choose from nine different movies. For more information go to www.eastbay-jewishfilm.org.

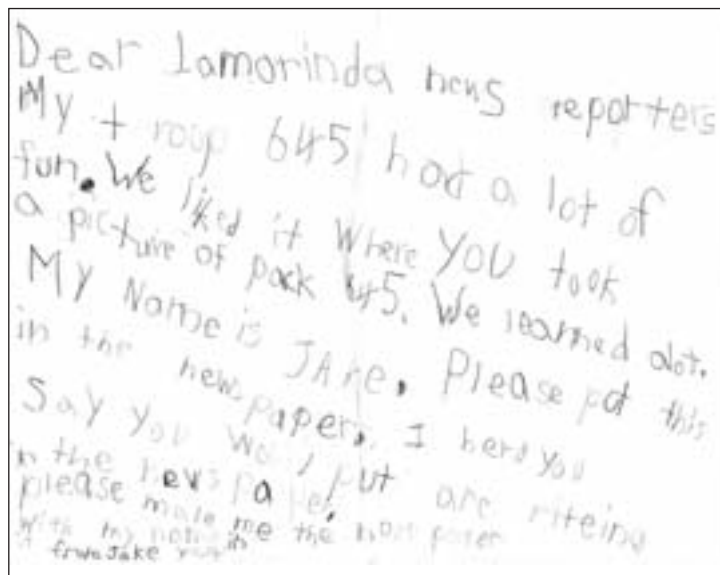
Pack 645 Visits Lamorinda Weekly



Pack 645

Photo Doug Kohen

The 1st grade Cub Scouts of Lafayette Pack 645 paid us a visit on Friday, January 21. We had a great time with them, and received a nice thank you note from Cub Scout Jake. You're very welcome, Jake!



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Not to be missed

ART

150 Years after the Civil War an NEH-sponsored exhibition, Lee and Grant, will be on view from through Sunday, Mar. 20 at The Hearst Art Gallery at Saint Mary's College in Moraga. The museum is open to the public Wednesdays through Sundays, 11am- 4:30pm. Adult admission is \$4; admission is free for K-12th grade students and Hearst members. A battlefield re-enactment, featuring nearly one hundred NCWA volunteers, is planned for Saturday, March 19, on the Saint Mary's College campus. Information: (925) 631-4379.

The Lafayette Gallery is presenting the Heart Throb Exhibit. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-5pm. Located at 50 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette. Admission is free. For more information please call (925) 284-2788 or go to www.lafayette-gallery.net.

The Moraga Art Gallery's new show, 2 plus 2 = 1, shorthand for "Two Artists, Two Visions: A Singular Experience," The exhibit brings together paintings in various media by Orinda's Beryl Glen-Reiland and watercolors by Moraga's George Ehrenhaft. The gallery is located at the Rheem Shopping Center, 570 Center Street, Moraga. For more information call (925) 376-5407.

MUSIC

Twelve recital pianists will entertain with compositions by Chopin, Brahms, Schubert, Beethoven and other classical composers, as well as 20th century composers Joaquin Turina and Ludovico Einaudi. Sunday, February 20, at 2pm. Located at the Grace Presbyterian Church, 2100 Tice Creek Blvd., Walnut Creek. The public is invited to this free concert. For more information go to www.ccpas.org.

Campolindo Orchestra Winter Concert on Thursday, February 24 at 7:30 in the CPAC. This will be a benefit concert with the proceeds to assist the Campolindo Orchestra's trip to Beijing. Featuring violinist Jeremy Cohen, a three-time Grammy nominee, and Barry Green with his Green Man Bass Group as guest artists. An evening of great music not to be missed! Tickets are \$10 only and on sale now. Call 270-8083 to reserve your ticket. More information on website www.campomusic.org.

Generations In Jazz presents The Big Band Of Rossmoor Feb 25 for a big band dance and concert at The Veterans Memorial Building. Tickets are on sale at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce for \$10. Reserve tickets at 284-7404 or purchase at the door. Free dance lessons are available from 7-8pm with instructor Gail Enright. Then the dance and concert begins at 8pm.

Campolindo Jazz Dinner Dance featuring the Campolindo High School Jazz Band, is coming up on Saturday, February 26 at Temple Isaiah in Lafayette. Tickets are \$55 (\$60 after February 7) and on sale now. Visit www.campomusic.org or contact Diane Haley, 631-1439.

Voci, conducted by Jude Navari, is seeking experienced choral singers for all voice parts. Our spring concert, entitled Double. The 24-voice ensemble sings primarily classical music from a wide variety of historical periods. Voci rehearses Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 10pm in Orinda. For more information or to schedule an audition, please contact artistic director Jude Navari at jude-navari@comcast.net.

THEATER

Town Hall Theatre presents The Glass Menagerie, by Tennessee Williams, February 19-March 19, with previews on February 17 & 18. See article page L5.

The International Film Showcase presents "Illegal", February 25-28. See article on page L5

Not to be missed

LECTURE & LITERATURE

"Live at the Orinda" a champagne-splashed evening of live professional comedy on Friday, March 11th, Orinda Theatre, Theatre Square, Orinda. The whole community is invited to fill the 750 seat Orinda Theatre to laugh until your sides hurt. Doors open at 7pm, 17 and over only. Advance tickets: \$30 (\$35 at the door). For more information and tickets visit www.orindachamber.org.

OTHER

What: A panel on the Bay Area housing and mortgage crisis and economic and employment trends. Panelists: Congressman John Garamendi, 10th Congressional District, Gary Zimmerman, senior economist Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, and Christopher George, founder and CEO, CMG Mortgage. Moderated by: Tomas Gomez-Arias, director, Center for the Regional Economy, Saint Mary's College. When: Friday, February 18 from 1-3 pm. Where: Claeys Lounge, Soda Activity Center, Saint Mary's College of California, 1928 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga. Admission is Free.

Peace Corps at 50: Realizing the Promise of Its Next 50 years- Lecture by Kevin Quigley who has more than 20 years of non-profit leadership experience in advancing international understanding and civil society. A former Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand, he is President/CEO National Peace Corps Association. When: Tuesday, Feb. 22 at 7 pm. Where: Soda Activity Center, Saint Mary's College, 1928 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga.

On Wednesday, Feb 23, Dr. Marshall Zaslove will lead a meditation workshop from 6-8 pm at the Orinda Library using as a guide the book "Inner and Outer Peace through Meditation" by Rajinder Singh. He will present the latest medical and scientific data and the benefits gained from the exercise of this ancient practice. This program takes place in the Garden Room of the Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way in Orinda. It is free to all. For more info please visit ecclib.org or call (925)-254-2184.

The Orinda Library will host a do-cent talk on Tuesday, March 1 at 7pm on Berkeley Repertory's production of Lynn Nottage's Pulitzer Prize winning drama, "Ruined." This powerful award-winning play provides a bleak yet beautiful look at the lives of women in the civil war ravaged land, the Congo.

Gerald Henig, an Emeritus Professor of History at Cal State East Bay and the author several books including the award-winning book "A Nation Transformed: How the Civil War Changed America Forever" will speak on Wednesday afternoon, March 2, at 2:00 pm at the Moraga library, 1500 Saint Mary's Rd. (925) 376-6852.

March 3rd, at 1pm, join Moraga library staff for a discussion of Geraldine Brooks' 2005 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction book "March: A Novel." The book concerns an idealistic cleric, Mr. March, who becomes a Union chaplain and later finds himself assigned to be a teacher on a cotton plantation that employs freed slaves. Copies of "March: A Novel" are available through the County Library System. The Moraga library is located at 1500 Saint Mary's Rd, Moraga. (925) 376-6852.

KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS

Have you ever wished you could hear what really happens to our tween/teen girls in middle and high school? A panel of local high school students from the Acalanes Union High School District will share their stories, their successes and their mistakes, and debunk some of the misconceptions parents have about this sometimes trying time for the girls in our communities. Monday, February 28, from 7-8:30pm at Stanley Middle School, in the Multi-Purpose Room, in Lafayette. For more information go to sister2sister.info.

Not to be missed

Campolindo High School Parents Club and Healthy Choices Committee

will present a Teen Drug Symposium hosted in the Campolindo High School Library on Monday, Feb. 28 from 7-8:30pm. The Symposium will feature testimonials from local parents and students who have dealt first-hand with drug addiction and recovery. Additionally, we will hear from Dr. Timothy Browne, a local Psychologist and addiction specialist. For More Information and to RSVP please contact Roxy Klein at roxygklein@comcast.net.

OTHER

Fulbright Hosts Needed
Saint Mary's College is offering a wonderful opportunity for local community members to take part in people-to-people diplomacy by hosting 1-2 of our Southeast Asian Fulbright women in their home. The College has organized a four-day leadership seminar for the U.S. State Department to prepare the students to return home after completing their Master's or Doctorate degrees later this spring. This special group of 40 Fulbright women come from the countries of Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia and will be on the campus of Saint Mary's College and in the Lamorinda communities from March 30 - April 2.

Open your Home and Open a Door to another country by hosting one or two students from this amazing group. Although the scholars have been studying at U.S. universities for the past 2-6 years, many of them have never stayed in an American home. Please consider sharing your home with 1 or 2 of the Fulbright students for 3 nights. For those of you interested in learning more about the great intercultural sharing opportunity, please contact Susan Miller Reid, Director, Center for International Programs at Saint Mary's, at 925-631-4316 or by email: smiller@stmaries-ca.edu.

Salsa & Bachata with Tomaj presents Salsa Mondays in Orinda. Beginning class from 7-8, Intermediate class from 8-9:30. It is a 6-week series, Jan. 10 - Feb. 28. Singles \$72, Couples \$130; Drop-in: \$15. Located at the Orinda Community Center, 26 Orinda Way. Register at your first class, or call (925) 254-2445.

The Ninth Annual "A Nite at the Races" will be staged by Rotary Club of Moraga on Saturday, March 12, at the Holy Trinity Cultural Center on School Street in Moraga. The cost is \$45 per person. The proceeds from this event will help Moraga Rotary fund its local and international youth, educational, and humanitarian causes. For information or reservations, please contact Rotarian Frank May at (925) 376-8195 or at mayfrl@comcast.net.

The "Starting Points" Series, led by Pastor John Valentine, is Intended for people seeking to discover (or re-discover) what it means for a Lutheran, a Christian and a child of God. From 9:45-10:25am, Feb 6, 13, 27. Located at the Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church 433 Moraga Way, Orinda. For more information call, Lisa - (925) 254-3422 or lisa@holyshepherd.org.

Homeopathy On The Fly. Renita Herrmann will focus on how to quickly and efficiently use homeopathy as a treatment process. Join us at the Homeopathy Every Day Study Group of Walnut Creek Thursday, February 17, from 6-7pm. 43 Quail Court, Suite 215. Cost: \$9.00. For more info see http://myranissen.com/blog/?p=2008.

Grief Support Meetings, the Contra Costa/Alameda County Widowed Persons Support Group is offering grief support meetings for the recently widowed. These sessions are run by widowed people. The meetings will be Saturday January 15, February 19 from 10am to 12noon. They are held at St. Stevens Church, 66 St. Stevens Dr., Orinda. You need not attend all sessions. Just come when you

can. No reservation needed. For questions, please contact Penny Robb at (510) 654-0974 or (925) 032-3448.

Aegis of Pleasant Hill announces a series of educational programs designed to enhance the skills of professionals working with people who have dementia, their families and caregivers. The first program is entitled "It Takes a Family: Building Partnerships with Families Affected by Dementia." Program presented by dementia expert, Laurie White, MSW on Wednesday, March 2, 2-5pm at Aegis of Pleasant Hill, 1660 Oak Park Blvd, Pleasant Hill. This is a FREE event. RSVP 925-939-2700.

Will your will stand up? Can you trust your trust? With the new legal & economic landscape, walk through the important steps you need to create certainty about your bequests. Located at the Arts & Science Discovery Center at LLLC. Tues. Feb. 23 9:30-11am.

The 3rd annual Moraga Classic Car Show sponsored by the Moraga Chamber of Commerce and 5A Rent A Space will be held Saturday May 14 from 11am-4pm in the Rheem Center. Please register your classic car by visiting moragachamber.org or visit 5A Rent A Space at 455 Moraga rd Suite F. For more information please call (925) 247-4629.

POLITICAL GATHERINGS

The Lamorinda Republican Woman, Federation Club will meet Thursday February 17, at 11am. The topic this week is "The Legal Case Against Obamacare." Our speaker will be Brad Dacus, President, Pacific Justice Institute. Located at the Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante.

GARDEN

Moraga Garden Club meets February 17, at the Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School St., Moraga. The general meeting is from 9:30-10:00 am. Our topic will be "Our Garden at the Contra Costa Times," and our speaker is Joan Morris, Editor of Home and Garden Section at CCT. Welcome to all.

The Northern California Camellia Society presents our 65th Annual show, Saturday February 19, from 1-5pm. Those wishing to show their flowers should arrive before 10:30am. The show will be held at the First Baptist Church of Walnut Creek, 2336 Buena Vista Ave., Walnut Creek. For more information please call, (925) 937-0188

CLUBS

The Suburban Woman's Club of Lafayette meets on the 3rd Thursday of the month at the Lafayette Community Center in the Elderberry Room at 11:30am. The next meeting will be February 17. We invite all women over the age of 55 to join us. Lunch is provided by the members and an interesting speaker is scheduled. For more information on the club and our activities contact Jean Cappa at Jeanc43821@aol.com or join us at the next meeting. We look forward to seeing you.

Sons in Retirement Lamorinda Branch 171 meets the first Wednesday monthly at Holy Trinity Culture Center 1700 School St. Moraga. Social hour 11 am, lunch 12 pm. The after lunch speaker will be Scott B Denison who has been the General Manager for the Leshner Center for the last 20 years. He is also the Managing Director of the Center Repertory Company and over the years has directed numerous production. He will speak on Creating an Art Center. For membership information, call Larry at (925)631-9528.

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A Blast from the Past

By Susie Iventosch



From left: Russell, June and Steve Thaw Photo courtesy Steve Thaw

Delightful old recipes resurface from time to time and with a wee bit of updating, they make very nice “new” additions to our recipe files. My mom recently pulled her mom’s chicken and wild rice casserole out of the file to take to her book club luncheon in Graeagle. The recipe was safely tucked into Do Bee’s (my grandmother) file on two different recipe cards—one from Maxine Demeter and the other from Jean St. Hill, both good friends from her Orinda bridge club days. Just like today, they enjoyed their potlucks and were always on the lookout for the perfect new recipe to share.

My mom and I decided to update the original, adding Kalamata olives, sundried tomatoes and fresh basil, but who knows what our daughters and granddaughters will add when they dust off these recipes and add the latest ingredients to hit market shelves in 2050!

Longtime Orinda-Moraga resident Steve Thaw (a member of Campolindo’s first graduating class in 1966), brought to our attention an award-winning recipe his mom, June, submitted to The Squire* back in June of 1968. Her “Patio Steak Broil” won her a \$5 gift certificate—good at any store in the Moraga Center!

The winning recipe was for scored flank steak marinated in a delicious-sounding concoction made of melted butter, tomato paste, garlic, pepper, red wine vinegar and bay leaf. This seems like it might be perfectly current today, though Thaw, now a vegan, would prefer to use it with a veggie burger or eggplant!

“Both my mom and her mom, Lula Taylor, were really good cooks,” Thaw remembers. “Anything my mom fixed for my dad’s company potlucks were the first to go. Her potato salad was amazing.”

Her potato salad is still one of his all-time favorites.

“She always cooked the potatoes just right ... not too mushy and not too underdone, either,” he said.

After serving in both fronts of WWII, Steve’s dad, Wallace, worked for many well-known companies from Standard Oil, to Sherwin Williams, Cutter Labs and Kaiser Center for Technology, so June’s delicious cooking enjoyed a wide audience. She also served as president of the Moraga Betas and the Welcome Wagon, where her dishes were always popular.

Diagnosed with polio in 1954, June made all of her wonderful dishes with the use of just

one of her arms. But, this did not cut down on her socializing—or cooking efforts. Her many friends took turns picking her up and off they went to social and philanthropic functions, goodies in hand.

“My mom entered quite a few recipes contests, and I now have her huge box of cookbooks,” Thaw said. “I am an advocate for good food and diet and I really appreciate home cooking. My mom fostered that outlook for me, not only with her excellent cooking, but by taking the time to make Christmas, gingerbread and oatmeal cookies with my twin brother, Russell, and me. Nowadays, I really enjoy cooking and going to vegan potlucks.”

Thaw says he makes his own popular dish—a salad, and, following family tradition, his is also one of the first to disappear at potlucks. The salad contains spinach, almonds, sesame sticks, blueberries, red onion, raw potato, (yes, raw potato!), olives, and “nearly any veggie you like”, all dressed in a mustard-balsamic dressing. Maybe I can get him to send us an official copy, so we can share it with you one of these days!

More on financiers ...

If you enjoyed the “financiers” recipe from our last issue, you may be interested in knowing there is an actual “financiers” pan available at Sur La Table. Lamorinda Weekly reporter Sophie Braccini, who hails from France, said, “I don’t think that the shape of the ‘moule’ changes much of anything, but this distinctive shape makes the little cake more noticeable.”

I’ve also seen them made in fluted round shapes, which are also really cute.

Here is a link to the rectangular financiers pan:

<http://www.surlatable.com/product/PRO-612655/de-Buyer-Elastomoule-Mini-Financier-Grid>
 *Check our archive for more articles about The Squire at www.lamorindaweekly.com.

Chicken & Wild Rice Casserole

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup brown rice, cooked (1 cup before cooking)
- 1 cup wild rice, cooked (1 cup before cooking)
- 1 large yellow onion, coarsely chopped and caramelized in olive oil
- 3/4 cup chopped sundried tomatoes
- 1 cup (pitted and quartered) Kalamata olives
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cooked and cut into bite-sized pieces
- 2 Italian turkey sausages, cooked, casing removed and cut into bite-sized pieces (optional), about 1½ cups bite-sized sausage bits.
- 1½ cups grated Parmesan (or sharp white cheddar, or both!)
- 1 can cream of chicken soup or cream of mushroom soup (can use two cans, but I prefer to use just one)
- 2 teaspoons Pick-a-Pepper Sauce
- 1 tablespoon Soy Sauce
- ¼ fresh basil leaves, cut into fine strips or chiffonade

DIRECTIONS

Cook rice according to directions. Mix all ingredients (reserve ½ cup cheese) and pour into greased 9x13 inch casserole dish. Sprinkle reserved cheese over the top. Bake at 350° until hot and cheese is bubbly.
 Note* The original recipes called for diced celery, mushrooms, green pepper and sometimes shrimp, too, but no olives, basil, or sundried tomatoes. I’ve used feta cheese, too. You can definitely integrate your favorite ingredients into this dish!



Photo Susie Iventosch

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.

These recipes are available on our web site. Go to: www.lamorindaweekly.com

Many of our readers like Susie’s recipes. Our website now features a link to our recipe page where you can read, print or download all of the recipes we have published. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at 925-377-0977



Copied from The Squire, June 1968

Mrs. Wallace Shaw’s Award-Winning Patio Steak Broil

The Squire is very pleased to announce the winner of our recipe contest ... Mrs. Wallace Thaw, 30 Woodside Drive, Moraga.

It was a very difficult contest to judge, since all entries were delicious. But, the judges finally selected Mrs. Thaw’s Patio-Steak Broil for her unusual twist to the recipe.

Mrs. Thaw wins a \$5 gift certificate good at any store in the Moraga Center. And, many thanks for the other entrants for their very good recipes.

Patio Steak Broil

INGREDIENTS

- About 2 lbs. flank steak, scored
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- ½ to 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 1 cup water
- 1 bay leaf

DIRECTIONS

In a shallow dish, prepare marinade by blending together tomato paste, garlic salt, salt, pepper, vinegar and water. Add bay leaf. Place steak in marinade overnight. Remove steak, also bay leaf. Transfer marinade to small pan and add butter. Place 4 to 5 inches from coals and broil 5 to 7 minutes, occasionally spoon marinade over top. Turn and broil additional 5 to 7 minutes or until desired doneness. Add topping, slice diagonally and serve.

Toppings

Whip ¼ cup butter until fluffy, add 2 cups shredded cheese. Beat until smooth. Or, lightly fold 2 tablespoons chili sauce, 1 tablespoon chopped onion, and 1 teaspoon prepared horseradish into ½ cup sour cream.

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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 04 Issue 25 Wednesday, February 16, 2011



A Tale of Two House Flips ...read on page OH6

Solar Ovens – From Lafayette to Kabul

By Sophie Braccini

Scharline Howell set the quesadilla on the solar stovetop 15 minutes before I arrived. When I was directed to the Howells' backyard, the cheese had melted and the tortilla was browning in the pan, ready to eat. On a nearby table, Jack Howell set up a solar oven he built 20 years ago and still uses today. The sun on this February morning was already warming the air and the thermometer set at the center of the oven read 300 degrees F.

100 such solar ovens, constructed

under Howell's direction for Budd MacKenzie's Trust in Education, will soon be shipped to Kabul, Afghanistan. (See www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0313/Budd-MacKenzie-a-Man-Consumed-by-his-Passion-for-Freedom.html or www.trustededucation.org/.)

About thirty years ago, Howell founded Morning Sun Press, a publishing company that he still manages part-time today. In 1978 he met Dan Halacy, who designed solar cookers that could

be built very inexpensively. Howell published Halacy's book, *Cooking with the Sun*, and built the solar cookers he still uses. "They last forever," says Howell, "as long as you keep them out of the rain."

"The stovetop cooker is made of cardboard, with a Mylar coating, an EMT pipe attached at the center with a floor flange, and a holder for the pan," explains Howell, "it is very easy to assemble, and weights only three pounds. We take it everywhere – for picnics and

on trips." Howell, who according to his wife is the cook of the family, says he can do anything in the cooker; pieces of chicken, potatoes, pizza, casseroles just like on a regular stovetop. The Lafayette resident thinks solar cookers are a great addition to an earthquake kit or emergency plan.

The oven is a slightly heavier construction that sits on a plywood frame. The sides are made of cardboard covered in Mylar as well. The center – the oven itself – is made of foam painted black to retain the heat. "The paint has to be a special non-toxic material," says Howell, "for the 100 ovens for Afghanistan, we got a special deal from Ecohome Improvement in Berkeley," Howell explains. "We use the oven for slow cooking food," he adds, "The temperature reaches 350 degrees after 40 minutes of pre-heating. It takes about 1½ hours to cook a whole chicken."

When he met MacKenzie, Howell knew he had found a new outlet for the oven. "At first I was too busy to think about it," says MacKenzie, "but I told Jack, if you run it, I'll support it!" MacKenzie took a trial sample of five solar cookers that Howell built to Afghanistan and after testing in refugee camps they decided to build 100. "People in camps are the least likely to be able to afford the wood that they use to cook and sterilize the water," says MacKenzie, "70% of their wood supply is consumed just to boil water. In a country that has 300 days of sun a year it is at least a very cost effective way to sanitize the water."

... continued on page OH4



Scharline and Jack Howell cooking solar.

Photo Sophie Braccini

Desperately Seeking the Following Homes in Lamorinda for Qualified Buyers!

These buyers have already viewed the current inventory and have not found the "right house". Do you have that house and are you thinking of selling this spring?

3 bedroom, 2.5 bath home in Orinda--buyer's physical requirements are for a single level updated home under \$900,000.

Call or email **Bruce Maxon** at (925) 253-2144, ibruce@comcast.net, CDRE# 00877963

4 bedroom, 2 bath, at least 2100 sq' with an ample yard, "big enough to throw a ball", in Burton Valley or the Trail Neighborhood of Lafayette. Buyers will pay up to \$1,100,000, possibly more if there is a separate in-law apartment or cottage.

Call or email **Pamela Halloran** at (925) 323-4100, pamelahalloran.com, CDRE#00936191

5 bedroom, 3 bath, at least 3,500 sq' with a flat yard for small children to play. Move-in condition, traditional style preferred \$1,400,000-\$1,800,000. Anywhere in Lamorinda.

Call or email **April Matthews** at (925) 200-0773, aprilmat@comcast.net, CDRE#01221153

4 bedroom, 3 bath, at least 3,000 sq' with good yard access for entertaining. Views are a plus. \$1,000,000-\$1,400,000. Orinda Country Club or Tahos area.

Call or email **April Matthews** at (925) 200-0773, aprilmat@comcast.net, CDRE#01221153

3 or more bedrooms, 3^{1/2} baths, 3,000 sq', contemporary style with easy yard access for entertaining. \$1,000,000.-\$1,450,000. Orinda only.

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3 plus bedrooms, 2 plus baths, level out yard in Lamorinda. Quiet street. Cosmetic fixer ok. Flexible timing. \$600,000-\$750,000.

Call or email **Karen Murphy** at kmurphy@villageassociates.com (925) 788-6322, CDRE#00699318

4 bedrooms, 3 baths, family room. 2800 plus sq'. Up to \$1.2 million in Orinda. Timing is flexible.

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Lovely young family looking for home in North Orinda with privacy, wooded feel, smaller yard okay, minimum four bedrooms, love mid century architecture - \$1,600,000 budget. Willing to do cosmetic work.

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Growing family looking for home in Lafayette (first choice) or Orinda - want a great yard, like higher ceilings open floor plan, love a playroom, neighborhood feel a plus - \$1,500,000 budget.

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	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	6	
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$585,000	
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,462,500	
MORAGA	7	
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$389,000	
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,348,000	
ORINDA	5	
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$625,000	
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,300,000	

LAFAYETTE

3180 Camino Colorados, \$915,000, 4 Bdrms, 1935 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 1-11-11; Previous Sale: \$1,079,000, 06-29-05

3959 Cowan Road, \$585,000, 3 Bdrms, 1680 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 1-11-11; Previous Sale: \$1,070,000, 06-13-07

580 Francis Drive, \$650,000, 4 Bdrms, 2468 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 1-12-11
715 Las Trampas Road, \$1,462,500, 4 Bdrms, 3316 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 1-14-11; Previous Sale: \$925,000, 06-29-01

1163 Pleasant Hill Circle, \$825,000, 3 Bdrms, 1805 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 1-11-11; Previous Sale: \$450,000, 04-23-10

3142 Sandalwood Court, \$875,000, 5 Bdrms, 3782 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 1-24-11

1023 Sunrise Ridge Drive, \$1,245,000, 4 Bdrms, 3422 SqFt, 1998 YrBlt, 1-14-11; Previous Sale: \$1,579,000, 04-03-07

MORAGA

142 Cypress Point Way, \$760,000, 2 Bdrms, 1444 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 1-14-11; Previous Sale: \$905,000, 08-30-07

144 Greenbriar, \$695,000, 2 Bdrms, 2029 SqFt, 1986 YrBlt, 1-10-11
1047 Larch Avenue, \$725,000, 3 Bdrms, 1460 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 1-14-11; Previous Sale: \$717,000, 09-23-04

452 Millfield Place, \$827,500, 5 Bdrms, 2377 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 1-14-11; Previous Sale: \$725,000, 12-28-01

39 Miramonte Drive, \$389,000, 3 Bdrms, 1447 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 1-14-11; Previous Sale: \$651,000, 03-13-06

70 Miramonte Drive, \$415,000, 2 Bdrms, 1762 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 1-19-11; Previous Sale: \$40,500, 12-13-84

41 South Merrill Circle, \$1,348,000, 4 Bdrms, 3425 SqFt, 1990 YrBlt, 1-12-11; Previous Sale: \$1,615,000, 07-20-07

ORINDA

63 El Gavilan Road, \$625,000, 3 Bdrms, 2175 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 1-14-11
29 Knickerbocker Lane, \$895,500, 2 Bdrms, 2880 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 1-20-11

221 La Espiral, \$750,000, 2 Bdrms, 2087 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 1-14-11
383 Miner Road, \$1,300,000, 4 Bdrms, 3845 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 1-14-11; Previous Sale: \$1,701,000, 10-11-07

83 Muth Drive, \$982,000, 4 Bdrms, 1765 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 1-21-11

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

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

MORAGA

2129 Ascot Drive #19, 94556, Bear Stearns, 01-10-11, \$91,350, 432 sf, 1 bd
12 Josefa Place, 94556, Bank of America, 01-13-11, \$501,236, 1845 sf, 2 bd

ORINDA

44 Estabueno Drive, 94563, US Bank, 01-14-11, \$865,202, 1901 sf, 4 bd

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Solar Ovens – From Lafayette

...continued from page OH1

MacKenzie’s volunteers have been spending their Sundays working in Trust in Education’s warehouse. “The ovens are almost complete,” said MacKenzie, “the team still needs some handy volunteers.”

Howell believes that solar ovens are a great solution in many different environments. According to Sperling’s “Best Places to Live,” there are 262 sunny days per year in Lafayette, so solar ovens can be used 72% of the time, saving on gas and/or electricity. They are lightweight units perfect for outdoor and emergency cooking. In developing countries they are an inexpensive solution to the serious problem of indoor air pollution that some areas are crippled with – according to the World Bank, indoor air pollution ranks eighth globally among health risk factors, and fourth in developing countries (indoor air pollution is due to the use of low-cost, widely available traditional energy sources such as coal and bio-mass for cooking and home heating.)

The original book, “Cooking with the Sun,” by Beth and Dan Halacy, is out of print. Interested individuals can buy a solar cooker how-to booklet on the Morning Sun Press website at //home.ix.netcom.com/~jdhowell/ (go to Morning Sun Press Products).



Jack Howell (right)



The frame of the solar stovetop is made of cardboard

Photo Sophie Braccini



A family in a refugee camp

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tte to Kabul



it) constructs ovens with other Trust in Education volunteers.

Photo Budd MacKenzie



gee camp in Afghanistan receives a solar oven.

Photo Budd MacKenzie

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A Tale of Two House Flips

By Cathy Tyson

There used to be shows on cable television highlighting the process of flipping a house: buy a fixer-upper at a low price, do some improvements and sell quickly – making a profit on the deal. That was back in the day when it seemed like real estate prices in California, and elsewhere could never go down and there were actual buyers with, cough, bank-approved financing. The \$64,000 question these days is, has California's roller coaster real estate market hit bottom and can a contractor looking to quickly turn over a house make money on it?

According to Fannie Mae, the largest U.S. mortgage buyer, home prices

will probably start to gain in the third quarter of 2011. Dean Okamura, a realtor with Pacific Union in Orinda, agrees, "2010 was better than 2009 for the most part, values are not falling as rapidly as they were, but there is still a ton of Short Sales and a few REO's out there – both drag values south." He feels that good locations and values sell quickly and the market is picking up volume. Local home sale data demonstrate just that, for example in 2010 - 271 homes sold in Lafayette, compared to just 206 in 2009. Moraga saw a similar gain from 124 in 2009 to 167 in 2010, Orinda went from 166 sales in 2009 to 182 in 2010.

Is it possible to buy low and sell high? Two Lamorinda contractors are attempting to do that very thing – and are willing to take the risk to, hopefully, get the reward.

Contractor Robert Vallentyne purchased a very distressed property on La Espiral in Orinda. Carolyn Lacy and Stan Whal got in at the ground level on a home that had been declared a nuisance on Ruth Court in Lafayette. They had hoped to turn it around quickly, but a number of liens on the property stalled the project for months.

Vallentyne worked his way through the construction management program

at Cal State Sacramento while a young single parent. He enjoys transforming "the worst home in the neighborhood to the best." He describes the house on La Espiral as rotting away and the subject of numerous complaints. He purchased the property just before foreclosure with the help of some family members. By taking advantage of the lower area they more than doubled the square footage from 1800 square feet to 4000. The new "flipped" incarnation is completely different than the prior home. It now has five bedrooms, 3 plus baths, a wine cellar and a very spacious laundry room.

... continued on next page



Exterior of Ruth Court home in Lafayette before remodel.

Photos Cathy Tyson



Current view of Ruth Court house, construction should be completed in March.



Original La Espiral home in Orinda before flip.

Photo provided



Interior of finished remodel.

Photo provided

... House Flips continued

With three bedrooms and two bathrooms the house on Ruth Court that contractor Stan Wahl and partner Carolyn Lacy bought has approximately 1750 square feet. Wahl estimates the remodeling process will be complete in March. There were quite a few complicated liens on the property that had to be addressed before construction started. Wahl describes that process as, "herding cats." Wahl has completed six flips over the last two years and managed to make a profit every time, "it pays the bills" he said. Once the homes are all fixed up, "they sell quickly," he added.

"Our specialty is locating distressed homes in the Lamorinda area that can be thoroughly rehabilitated and put back on the market for a quick sale, slightly below market (price) so a family can enjoy the home, the neighborhood and the city," said Lacy. She hopes the scheduled replacement of the street this year happens sooner rather than later because, "it definitely needs it."

Contractor Jerry Isaacs of Moraga Remodel and Construction advises caution in house flipping: "While houses can be bought at very low prices, the possible profit factors still remain the same -and in fact are, in my opinion, even riskier than before. The carrying costs plus the remodeling costs and commissions are pretty much the same, and when the house is done and ready, there are just not very many buyers out there."

He continues to look at "fixer-uppers" but says nearly every single one pencils out as barely break even, "We can buy cheap, but we have to sell cheap." Jerry's advice: "If folks have the money to remodel, I believe now is a great time. We are all bidding jobs for less money than we have in years - the competition has become brutal. It's a perfect time for a first time buyer, or, families that want to stay put for a while."

Rob Olson, an experienced realtor also with Pacific Union, believes that flipping is more dangerous these days; the market is completely different than what it was from 2000 - 2005. Profitability depends on the amount of work needed, "Cosmetic fixer is the best way to go today. A partial tear down and major improvements can get expensive fast," said Olson.

He recommends buying the worst house in a great neighborhood at a low price for a successful flip. "It can be worthwhile; you can definitely increase the value of a property by sprucing it up - with paint, updating the kitchen and bathrooms, replacing windows - you should get your money out and then some."

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