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Merriewood Garden Full of Fruitful Lessons

By Cathy Tyson



Garden teacher Gantt Charming at the Merriewood Children's Garden

Photo Cathy Tyson

Who knew a piece of land could be so productive in so many ways? On a recent gray morning Merriewood Children's Center Garden Teacher Gantt Charming gave Lafayette Parks Trails and Recreation Commissioners a tour of the one-acre organic garden near Burton Valley Elementary School.

Although it's been a cool and rainy spring, raised beds are ready for corn transplants from the green house and fruit trees display what will be a bounty of apples, vines with definitely un-ripe tiny grapes along with blackberries can be found throughout the learning garden. The City of Lafayette lets the school use the land that would otherwise be the very edge of the Lafayette Community Park.

As the summer heats up, garlic, onions, corn, zucchini and lots of potatoes will grow under the watchful eyes of Charming and a bevy of little assistants from the Merriewood Children's Center. Merriewood offers nursery school for two through five year olds and before and after school

programs for Burton Valley students, along with summer programs.

The kids help with all aspects of the garden from planting to harvesting. Lessons will vary depending on the age of the kids – for preschoolers that could mean finding a flower of every color or collecting things that are rough or smooth – to engage the senses. For bigger children lessons can revolve around composting and recycling, and why the fruit isn't ready to pick quite yet.

"The kids prefer to eat rather than weed," said Charming, even munching on veggies like eggplant or kale. They love the chickens. A favorite request is to check for eggs and make omelets. He explains that because they have been raised by humans, the chickens have "imprinted" on people – so they think they're part of the family, consequently very tolerant.

This year there are more raised beds to combat hungry gophers, with wire mesh buried under the soil. One teepee made with sticks is already partially covered in a grape vine, an-

other with green beans – edible forts. Gantt placed a red flag in the top of one of the teepees, "and all of sudden it's now a castle with dragons."

It's easy to see why Merriewood management wants to encourage Charming to get his teaching certificate. He's currently taking early childhood education classes at DVC. Although he has a non-traditional history, clearly he brings a range of knowledge to the garden. He worked on a farm during the summer while he was at the Evergreen State College, after graduation he was a field biologist doing endangered bird work, then came back to the Bay Area and got a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy from California Institute of Integral Studies.

When he's not busy with the garden – it's only a three-quarter time job, Charming has his own business designing and installing organic, sustainable gardens for homeowners, GaiaCentric Gardens. He calls it "food scaping;" www.gaiacentricgardens.com.

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THE APP RAP

By Eric Pawlakos

Glympse

Price: Free
Developer: Glympse Inc.
For: Android Smartphones and iPhones

Have you even been somewhere and tried to describe your location to a friend or a parent? How would you like to be able to send a map of your location or the course you are navigating to anyone you wish in a matter of seconds?

Download Glympse to your device and this amazing app will let others see exactly where you are as long as they have an internet-enabled smartphone or computer. They don't need to have Glympse downloaded. When you want to send a Glympse of where you are, simply pick someone from your contact list (email address or phone number) and hit send.

It is that simple!

The Glympse appears on the computer or the smartphone, giving the exact location from where the Glympse was sent. In fact, a detailed street map is sent that shows precisely where you are at that time. Douglas McKinley, a junior at Miramonte, likes Glympse because, "You don't have to spend time texting or accessing Mapquest. I also like that only those with whom you want

to share your location can see where you are."

Their tagline is "share your where," but there is more to Glympse than just sending your location. For example, if you want someone to be able to follow your route, Glympse can enable tracking of your direction in real time. Jared O'Rourke, a senior at Acalanes, found the app particularly useful as he drove throughout California visiting colleges. "It was a great way of letting my parents know where I was without having to text them or call them."

Glympse indicates not only the route you are taking, but also if you are moving or stopped. You can control the amount of time your movements can be tracked. The app includes a patent-pending GlympseWatch timer that ends the transmission after a designated period of time.

When you want a fast and safe way for others to know and see where you are, Glympse is the perfect traveling companion. *Eric Pawlakos is a junior at Miramonte High School.*

Local Artists Helping Japan

By Andrea A. Firth



(From left) Local artist Makiko Vazifdar, Norm Nicholson, and Kimiko Kogure have organized a silent art auction to help with recovery efforts in Japan. Photo provided

"Knowing how lost the many people of Japan must feel following the disaster, I wanted to help from this side of the ocean," says Orinda resident Komiko Kogure. To achieve her goal, Kogure

participates in a weekly figure drawing class through the Orinda Community Center. Working with the class instructor, Norm Nicholson, and several of the other artists Kogure has organized a silent art auction to raise funds to help with the recovery efforts

in Japan. Over 100 artworks have been donated to the auction by dozens of Bay Area artists. "We reached out to our friends and the art community to spread the word, and we have had a wonderful response," says Kogure. "It's been a very healing process for me."

For Kogure, who is Japanese, the effects of the tsunami hit close to home. Although she has lived in California for 31 years, she has family and many friends who still reside in Japan. One close friend of Kogure's, who lived very close to the damaged nuclear plant, keeps her posted on the details of what is happening. "They have not moved on to recovery yet. They are still sifting through the debris to see what is left," says Kogure.

The silent auction will be held at the Orinda Community Center on Saturday, June 11th from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., bidding will close at 2:30 p.m. The original art will include paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, fabric art, jewelry, and ceramics. All of the proceeds will be donated to the Japanese Red Cross.

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